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THE CHANNINGS.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," AND "DANESBURY HOUSE."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the schoolboy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1862.

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LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET.

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THE CHANNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEARCH.

'Tom, where is Charles?'

'He is not in my pocket,' responded Tom Channing, who was buried deep in his studies, as he had been for some hours.

'Thomas, that is not the proper way to answer me,' resumed Constance, in a tone of seriousness, for it was from her the question had proceeded. 'It is strange he should run suddenly out in the abrupt way you describe, and remain so long as this. It is half-past nine! I am waiting to read.'

'The boys are up to some trick to-night with Mr. Calcraft, Constance, and he is one of them,' said Tom. 'He is sure to be in soon.'

Constance remained silent; not satisfied. A nameless, undefined sort of dread was creeping over her. Engaged with Annabel until eight

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o'clock, when she returned to the general sitting-room, she found Charles absent, much to her surprise. Expecting him to make his appearance every moment, the time may have seemed to her long, and his absence all the more unaccountable. It had now gone on to half-past nine, and still he was not come, and his lessons were not done. It was his hour for bed-time.

Tom had more than usual to do that night, and it was nearly ten when he rose from his books. Constance watched him put them aside, and stretch himself. Then she spoke:—

'Tom, you must go and find Charles. I begin to feel uneasy. Something must have happened, to keep him out like this.'

The feeling 'uneasy' rather amused Tom. Previsions of evil are not apt to torment school-boys. 'I expect the worst that has happened may be a battle royal with old Ketch,' said he. 'However, the young monkey had no business to cut short his lessons in the midst, and go off in this way, so I'll just be after him and march him home.'

Tom took his trencher and flew towards the cathedral. He fully expected the boys would be gathered somewhere round it, not a hundred miles from old Ketch's lodge. But he could not come upon them anywhere. The lodge was closed, was

dark and silent, showing every probability that its master had retired for the night to sleep away his discomfiture; the cloisters were closed, and the Boundaries lay calm in the moonlight, undisturbed by a single footstep. There was no sign of Charles, or of any other college boy.

Tom halted in indecision. 'Where can he have gone to, I wonder? I'm sure I don't know where to look for him! I'll ask at Yorke's! If there's any mischief up, Tod's sure to know of it.'

He crossed the Boundaries, and rang at Lady Augusta's door. Tod himself opened it. Probably he thought it might be one of his friends, the conspirators: certainly he had not expected to find Tom Channing there, and he looked inclined to run away again.

'Tod Yorke, do you know anything of Charles?'

'Law! how should I know anything of him?' returned Tod, taking courage, and putting a bold face upon it. 'Is he lost?'

'He is not lost, I suppose; but he has disappeared somewhere. Were you in the game with old Ketch, to-night?'

'What game?' inquired Tod, innocently.

But at this moment Gerald, hearing Tom's voice, came out of the sitting-room. Gerald Yorke had a little cooled down from his resentment

against Tom. Since the decision of the previous day, nearly all Gerald's wrath had been turned upon Mr. Pye, because that gentleman had not exalted him to the seniorship. So great was it, that he had no room to think of Tom: besides, Tom was a fellow-sufferer, and had been passed over equally with himself.

'What's the row?' asked Gerald.

Tom explained, stating what he had heard from Ketch of the trick the boys had played him; and Charley's absence. Gerald, who really was not cognisant of it in any way, listened with avidity, making his own comments, and enjoying beyond everything the account of Ketch's fast in the supper department. Both he and Tom exploded with mirth; and Tod, who said nothing, but listened with his hands in his pockets, dancing first on one leg, then on the other, nearly laughed himself into fits.

'What did they take out the cloister keys for?' demanded Gerald.

'Who's to know?' said Tom. 'I thought Tod was sure to be in it.'

'Don't I wish I had been!' responded that gentleman, turning up the whites of his eyes to give earnestness to the wish.

Gerald looked round at Tod, a faint suspicion stealing over him that the denial was less genuine

than it appeared. In point of fact, Mr. Tod's had been the identical trencher, spoken of as having watched the effect of the message upon old Ketch. 'I say, Tod, you were off somewhere to-night for about two hours,' said Gerald. 'I'll declare you were.'

'I know I was,' said Tod, readily. 'I had an appointment with Mark Galloway, and I went to keep it. If you skinned me alive, Channing, I couldn't tell where Miss Charley is, or where he's likely to be.'

True enough in the abstract. Tom Channing stopped talking a short while longer, and then ran home. 'Is Charley in yet?' was his first question.

No, Charley was not in; and the household now became seriously concerned. It was past ten. By his leaving his lessons half done, and his pen inside his exercise-book—of which exercise he had not left many words to complete; but he had other studies to do—it was evident to them that he had not gone out intending to stay. Indeed, if he required to go out in an evening, he always asked leave, and mentioned where he was going.

'Haven't you found him?' exclaimed Judith, coming forward as Tom entered. 'Where in the world can the child be?'

'Oh, he's safe somewhere,' said Tom. 'Don't worry your old head, Judy.'

'It's fit that somebody should worry their heads,' retorted Judith sharply to Tom. 'He never stopped out like this afore—never! Pray Heaven there's no harm come anigh him!'

'Well done, Judy!' was Tom's answer. 'Harm! What harm is likely to have come to him? Helstonleigh has not been shaken by an earthquake to-night, to swallow him up; and I don't suppose any voracious kite has descended from the skies and carried him off in her talons. You'll make a simpleton of that boy till he's twenty!'

Judith—who, truth to say, did look very much after Charley, love him and indulge him—wasted no more words on infidel Tom, but went straight up to Hamish's room, and knocked at the door. Hamish was in it, at his writing table as usual, and Judith heard a drawer opened and shut before he came to her.

'Mr. Hamish, it's very queer about the child!' said Judith. 'I don't half like it.'

'What! Is he not come in?'

'No, he's not. And just to look how he has left his books and his lessons about, is enough to prove that something or other must have kept him. I declare my heart's all in a quake!

Master Tom, he has been out, and can't find no traces of him—though it's hard to tell whether he troubled himself to look much. Boys be as careless one of another as so many young animals.'

'I will come down directly, Judith.'

He shut the door, right in front of Judith's inquisitive nose, which was peering in to see what might be seen. Judith's curiosity in reference to her young master's night employment had increased rather than abated. Every night, night after night, as Hamish came home with the account books of the office under his arm, and carried them straight to his bed-room, Judith watched him go up with jealous eyes. Constance also watched him: watched him in a far more uneasy frame of mind than could be Judith's. The bringing home those books now, in Mr. Channing's absence, was only too plain a proof to Constance that his night work must be connected with them: and a perfectly sick feeling would rush over her heart. Surely there could be nothing amiss with the accounts?

Hamish shut the door, shutting out Judy. She heard him putting things away: she heard a lock turned, and the keys removed. Then he came forth, and went down with Judith.

The difficulty was, where to look for Charles?

It was possible that he might have gone to the houses of any one of the school-boys, and be there staying: if not very likely, still it was by no means impossible. Tom was despatched to Mr. Pye's, who had some half dozen of the king's scholars boarding in his house; and thence to other houses in the vicinity. All with the like result; all denied knowledge of Charles. The college bell struck eleven, the sound booming out in the silence of the night on their listening ears; and with that sound, Hamish grew alarmed.

They went out different ways: Hamish, Arthur, Tom, and Judith. Sarah was excessively anxious to make one of the searching party, but Judith imperatively ordered her to stop at home and mind her own business. Judy ran round and about the college, like anybody wild; nothing extra on her shoulders, and the border of her mob-cap flying. But the old red walls were high, and impenetrable, and silent, telling nothing of Charles Channing. She stopped at the low wall, extending from the side of the boat-house to some of the prebendal residences, and glanced over at the river. The water was flowing tranquilly along between its banks, giving out no sign that a young child was drowning, or had been drowned there not many hours before. 'No,' said Judy to herself, rejecting the doubt, which had come over

her as improbable, 'he can't have got in there. We should have heard of it.'

She turned, and took a survey around. She did not know what to do, or where to look. Still, cold, shadowy it all lay; the cathedral, the old houses, and the elm trees, with their birds, at rest now. 'Where *can* he have got to?' exclaimed Judith with a touch of temper.

One thing was certain, that it was of no use to wait where she was, and Judith betook herself home again. Just past the house of Lady Augusta Yorke she encountered the head-master, who was walking towards his home. He said 'Good night' to Judith, as he passed her; but she arrested him.

'We are in a fine way, sir! We can't find Master Charles.'

'Not find Master Charles?' repeated the Rev. Mr. Pye. 'How do you mean?'

'Why, it happened in this way, sir,' said Judith. 'He was at his lessons, as usual, with Master Tom, and he suddenly gets up and leaves them, and goes out, without saying a word to nobody. That was at seven, or a bit later; and he has never come in again?'

'He must be staying somewhere,' remarked Mr. Pye.

'So we all thought, sir, till it got late. 'He's

not likely to be staying anywhere now. Who'd keep him till this hour, a terrifying of us all into fits? Ketch—'

'Halloa, Judy! Any luck?'

The interruption came from Tom Channing. He had discerned Judy's cap from the other side of the Boundaries, and now came running across, unconscious that her companion was the head-master. Judy went on with her communication.

'Ketch, the porter, came to Master Tom an hour or two ago, complaining that the college boys had been serving him a trick to-night. They had pretended to invite him out somewhere to supper, and stole his cloister keys while he was gone. Now, sir, I'd not like to say too much again that surly-tempered brown bear,' went on Judy, 'but if he has got anything to do with the keeping the child out, he ought to be punished.'

Tom was up now, saw it was the master, and touched his trencher.

'Have you found your brother?' asked the master.

'No, sir. It is very strange where he can have got to.'

'What trick have the boys been playing Ketch to-night?' resumed Mr. Pye. 'Your servant tells

me that he has been round to you with a complaint of them.'

Tom went into a white heat. Judy ought to have kept her mouth shut. It was not his place to inform against the school, privately, to the master. 'Y—es,' he hesitatingly said; for a untruth he would not tell.

'What was the complaint?' continued Mr. Pye. 'Could this disappearance of your brother's be connected with it?'

'No sir, I don't see that it could,' replied Tom.

'You "don't see!" Perhaps you'll let me see, and judge. What had the boys been doing? Channing,' firmly spoke the master, perceiving his hesitation, 'I *insist* upon knowing.'

Tom was at his wits' ends. He might not defy the master, on the one hand; on the other, he knew the school would send him to Coventry for ever and a day, if he spoke; as he himself would have sent any other boy, in it, doing the like. He heartily wished Judy had been over in Asia before she had spoken of it, and her tongue with her.

'Were you in the affair yourself, pray?' asked the master.

'No, sir, indeed I was not; and I do not know a single boy who was. I have heard nothing of it except from Ketch.'

'Then what is your objection to tell me?'

'Well, sir, you know the rules we hold amongst ourselves,' said Tom, blurting out the truth, in his desperation. 'I scarcely dare tell you.'

'Yes, you dare, Channing, when I command you to do so,' was the significant answer.

'Tom had no resource; and, very unwillingly, Ketch's details were drawn from him bit by bit: the pseudo-invitation, the disappointment touching the tripe and onions, the missing the cloister keys when he got home, and the finding them upon the outside of the west door.

'Did he enter the cloisters and examine them?' said the master, speaking hastily. A phase of probability had struck him, which had not struck any of the Channings; and it was curious that it had not.

'I think not, sir,' replied Tom.

'Then, that's where Charles is, locked up in the cloisters!' said the master, the recollection of the former locking-up no doubt helping him to the conclusion. The fact of the keys being left hanging outside the cloister door might have been sufficient to direct your suspicions.'

Tom felt the force of the words; and was wondering how it was he had not thought of it, when a cry burst from Judith.

'If he is there, he never will come out alive! Oh, sir, what will become of us?'

The master was surprised. He knew it was not a desirable situation for any young boy; but 'never come out alive' were strong terms. Judy, explained them. She poured into the master's ears the unhappy story of Charles having been frightened in childhood; of his propensity still to supernatural fears.

'Make haste round! we must get the cloisters open immediately!' exclaimed the master, as all the full truth, of the dread imparted by Judith, became clear to him. 'Channing, you have light heels; run on, and knock up Ketch.'

'Tom tore off; never a lighter pair of heels than his to-night; and the master and the old servant followed. The master's sympathies, nay, his lively fears, were strongly awakened, and he could not leave the affair in this stage, late though the hour was.

'They arrived, to find Tom pummelling at Ketch's door. But to pummel was one thing; and to arouse Mr. Ketch, another. Mr. Ketch chose to remain deaf. 'I'll try the window,' said Tom. 'He must hear; his bed is close at hand.'

He knocked sharply at the window; and it at length elicited an answer from the drowsy gentleman, composed entirely of growls and abusive words.

'Get up,' called out Tom; 'the keys of the cloisters are wanted.'

'Then they may be wanted!' responded old Ketch, in a muffled tone, as if he were speaking from the bed-clothes. 'I'll see you all furder afore you gets the keys from me.'

'Ketch, produce the keys this instant!' interposed the master. 'You know my voice; the Rev. Mr. Pye's. How dare you?'

'I'll "dare" you all, if you don't go away!' raved old Ketch, mistaking, or pretending to mistake, the disturbers for his enemies the college boys. 'It's a second edition of the trick you played me this evening, is it? I hope the days 'll come when your stomach's 'll be a starving for tripe and onions, I do; I'll go to the dean with the first blessed glimmer o' daylight——'

'Ketch! I am the head-master. I am come for the cloister keys. There's a poor boy locked in the cloisters!'

'Is there? Praise be gived up for that! I wouldn't unlock him for a mint o' diaments. If you don't be off, I'll call the perlice.'

'Fire! fire!' shouted Judy, in a shrill tone, putting her mouth to the keyhole; for she despaired of gaining over Ketch by any other means. 'What a idiot you be, old Ketch! Do you want to be burnt up alive?'

'Fire!' shouted Tom, in stentorian tones. 'Fire! fire!' And Ketch, whether he was really

alarmed, or whether he recognized the head-master's voice, and deemed it imprudent to hold out longer, bundled out of bed, opened the door, and appeared before them in his night attire, which was more airy than elegant. Another minute, and impetuous Tom would have burst the window in.

'Beg pardon,' said Ketch, ungraciously, to the master. 'Them boys plays me up such tricks, that I'm always a thinking of 'em. Where's the fire?'

'I don't think it's anywhere,' said the master. 'The cloister keys, Ketch: and make haste. Which of the boys played you that trick to-night?'

Ketch gave a yell, for the point was a sore one. 'I never set eyes on one of 'em! They be too cunning for me.'

'Was my brother Charles one?' asked Tom, while Mr. Pye hastened away with the cloister keys.

'I tell ye I never see'd one! Can't you believe?' Tom did believe, and went after the master and Judy.

They entered the cloisters, and shouted out for Charles. Nothing answered them but the echoes. To *see* whether he was there, was impossible. Judy thought he might be lying somewhere, insensible from fright, and she ran up and down

feeling into niches, like one demented. Mr. Pye sent Tom back to old Ketch's to get a light, which was not supplied him without difficulty.

He was turning away with it, when Hamish came up. Hamish had been with all speed to Mr. Huntley's, to question Harry, as senior of the school, whether he knew what the trick of the night had been, and what boys were in it. Harry, however, who was in bed, assured Hamish of his entire ignorance. But for Mr. Huntley's veto, he would have got up and gone out to join in the search, and enjoyed it amazingly.

They carried the candle to every nook and corner of the cloisters, no result arising from it. Hamish and Tom got over and searched the burial-ground. He was not there. No signs, for their keen eyes, or for any others, remained of the night's work: the college boys were cautious. A couple of matches, half burnt, lay on the ground in the north quadrangle, but they told nothing. The boys were often lighting matches, as the master knew.

'I really think you must be mistaken in supposing Charles's absence has to do with this trick played to old Ketch—whatever it may have been,' he observed. 'It does not appear that the boys have been in the cloisters. Had any of them been locked in here, here they would be still.'

There was no denying it, and they quitted the cloisters and closed them. The keys were conveyed to Ketch, who had to get out of bed again to receive them, which he did with a great amount of wrath. Mr. Pye thought it would be proved that Charles must be at the house of one of the boys, carelessness or accident having detained him in it. And then he wished them good night and went home.

Completely at a nonplus were they. Hamish, ever hopeful, thought Charles had perhaps returned home: and they bent their steps thither. No, no; Constance, Arthur, and curious Sarah, were all outside the street-door, looking every way. Constance was too agitated to remain still in-doors. Arthur had just returned home. He had been to the houses of some of the college boys, those with whom Charles was most intimate, but could obtain no tidings of him.

Constance burst into tears. She grew excessively alarmed, when Judy mentioned the doubt lest he had been shut in the cloisters. 'But that fear is done away with,' said Hamish. 'We have searched them thoroughly. Do not distress yourself, Constance.'

'There goes midnight!' exclaimed Judy.

'Ugh!' shivered Sarah. 'I feel just as if somebody was walking over my grave, Miss Constance.'

'If they were walking over you, it mightn't be amiss,' reprimanded Judith. 'Don't talk such stuff as that, girl, in the young mistress's ears.'

The words died away into silence, and they stood listening to the strokes of the deep-toned cathedral bell. With the last, twelve, another day had dawned upon the world. What would it bring forth for them?

'I shall go to the police-station,' said Hamish. 'Constance, my dear, you had better not remain outside. Go in-doors.'

It was well to say 'Go in-doors,' but in the agitation and suspense at that moment overwhelming Constance, 'in-doors' was not so easy to bear. Hamish strode off, Tom following him. Arthur remained with his sister, waiting and watching still.

And so they waited and watched through the live-long night. Hamish was at work; the police were at work; Tom was at work: but neither sign nor trace could be found of Charles Channing.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN OFFICIAL CEREMONY INTERRUPTED.

A GREY dusky morning, enveloped in fog, succeeded to the fine night. Before seven o'clock—so watchful and alert are boys when mischief is agate—most of those who had been in the conspiracy were assembled and waiting round the school-room doors; generally, they could tear up at the twelfth moment. They would not have missed the sight of Charles Channing's arrival for half-a-crown a-piece, so curious were they to see how he looked, after his fright. As it happened, it was not at any of their homes that inquiries had been made the previous night; not one of them was, to say, intimate with Charley: they were mostly older than he. Consequently, they knew nothing of the search. Tod Yorke, who did know of it, had not yet arrived: of all the king's scholars, none were marked late more frequently han Master Tod.

The senior boy had gone to the head-master's for the keys as usual, and now came down the

cloisters, clanking them in his hand. 'Has Charles Channing turned up?' he called out, before he was well abreast of them.

Pierce senior choked away his inclination to laughter, which the sound of the name excited, and saucy Bywater answered. 'Where should he turn up from, Huntley? Has he been swallowed?'

'Hamish Channing came to our house last night, ages after I was in bed, saying they couldn't find him,' replied Huntley. 'What was in the wind last night with old Calcraft?'

The boys looked at him demurely; and Huntley, getting no reply, unlocked the school-room and entered it. They remained behind, winking to each other, and waiting still for Charles. It wanted yet a few minutes to seven.

'I say, what d'ye think?' whispered Bywater. 'After I had got our sheet smuggled in, all right, and was putting it on the bed, I found two big holes burnt in it. Won't there be a commotion when my old aunt finds it out! She'll vow I have been reading in bed. That was you, Pierce senior!'

'I'm sure I never burnt it,' retorted Pierce. 'It was the flame did it, if anything.'

'Here comes Bill Simms!' exclaimed Bywater, when their smothered laugh was over. 'What has he been doing to himself? He's as white as the ghost!"

Mr. Bill Simms assuredly did look white. He had a pale face at the best of times, and it was embellished with straw-coloured hair. But at the present moment it had turned ghastly, and his frame seemed all of a shake as he came along.

'What on earth has taken you, Simms?' demanded Hurst.

'Oh goodness!' uttered Simms, 'I wish I was well out of this! They are saying there's a college boy drowned!'

'What?' cried the boys, gathering round him.

'There was a crowd down by the boat-house as I came along,' responded Simms, as well as he could speak for his chattering teeth. 'I asked a fellow what it was, and he said he didn't rightly know, but he thought one of the college boys had been found drowned in the water.'

Some of the gentlemen-listener's faces turned as pale as Mr. Bill Simms's; as pale as each conscience. Bywater was the first to gather courage.

'It's not obliged to be Charley Channing, if there is any one drowned.'

'But it's sure to be him,' chattered Simms, his teeth as crazy as his grammar. 'Griffin junior says Arthur Channing went to their house last night at twelve, and said they couldn't find Charley.'

The consternation into which this episode of

news plunged the guilty ones, it is not easy to describe. A conviction that it *was* Charles Channing, who was drowned, overtook them all. School-boys are not quite without hearts, and they would have given all they possessed, in that moment, to see Charles come flying amongst them, as usual. Some of them began to wish they were without necks; for if Charles had come to an untimely end through their work, they might stand a chance of furnishing employment to the veritable Mr. Calcraft, on their own score. Tod Yorke came leaping up in delight.

'Oh, wasn't it good! The young one——'

'Hold your noise, Tod! They are saying he's dead.'

'Who's dead?' wondered Tod.

'Charley Channing. A college boy is found in the river, drowned.'

'Oh, that be hanged!' exclaimed Tod, half in mocking disbelief, half in awful fear. 'It *can't be*, you know. Who says it?'

'There's seven! We must go in, or Huntley will be on to us. Mind!' added Pierce senior, for he was the speaker, 'we must all keep each other's counsel, and be in one tale—that we know nothing at all about it.'

They slunk into school. But that the senior boy was occupied with his new duty—the calling over

of the roll—he might have observed something was wrong. To play up a bit of mischief is the legitimate privilege of college boys; but to have led to a companion's death, is a terror-striking affair; and their countenances betrayed that it was.

Before the roll was finished, the head-master was in school. Tom Channing—it was late for him—entered afterwards. The master beckoned to him.

'Is Charles found?'

'No, sir. We cannot get any tidings of him at all. We have not been to bed, any of us; and the police are searching also.' Had Tom Channing come from the other side of the Boundaries, near the boat-house, perhaps he might have been able to give a different account.

The master made no comment then. He motioned Tom to his desk, and gave the word for prayers. As the boys were rising from their knees, Hamish Channing entered the school, attended by Mr. Ketch.

Hamish approached the master, who shook hands with him. Ketch remained snarling and grinning defiance at the door, shaking his fist and his old teeth covertly at the boys. If looks could blow up a room, the college school had certainly gone aloft then.

'I hear you have not found the boy?' said the master to Hamish. 'It is very singular.'

'We have not found him. Mr. Pye,' continued Hamish, gravely. 'I come to demand of your courtesy an immediate investigation into the doings of the college boys last evening. That the disappearance of Charles is in some measure connected with it, we cannot do otherwise than think. I have brought Ketch with me that he may tell his tale.'

Ketch was marshalled forward and ordered to tell his tale, and the business of the school was suspended. Ketch told it in a distinct way enough; but he could not forbear enlarging upon his cruel disappointment over the tripe and onions, and it sent the school into convulsions. In the midst of it, Tom Channing breathed freely; Ketch's preferring the complaint, did away with the unpleasantness he had feared might arise, through having been forced to disclose it to the master.

'I should be sorry to get displeasure visited upon any of the boys,' resumed Hamish: 'indeed, I should esteem it a favour, sir, if you will not punish them for any disclosure that may arise through this step which I have taken. I dare say,' he added, turning his laughing gaze upon the lot, 'that I should have been one of the ringleaders myself, in my school days, therefore it

would not be fair for me to bring punishment upon them. I only wish to know which of the school were in it, that I may make inquiries of them whether Charles was one, and, if he was, what they know of his movements afterwards.'

The address was fair and candid; so was Hamish's face; and some of the conspirators, in their good feeling, might have freely confessed, but for the something just whispered to them by Simms. That closed their lips.

'Do you hear?' said the master, speaking sharply, for he had rather, ten times over, that the school frankly avowed mischief, when brought to book: he was never half so severe. 'Why are you silent?'

Bill Simms, who had the bump of conscientiousness very large, with a wholesome dread of consequences, besides being grievously timid, felt that he could not hold out long. 'Oh murder!' he groaned to Mark Galloway, next to whom he sat, 'let's tell, and have done with it.'

Mark turned cold with fear. 'You're a pretty fellow!' he uttered, giving him a tremendous kick on the shins. 'Would you like us all to be tried for our lives?' Which suggestion made matters worse; and Bill Simms's hair began to stand on end.

'Huntley, have you any cognizance of this?' demanded Mr. Pye.

'None, sir.' And so said the three seniors under him.

'Boys!' said the master, bringing his cane down upon the desk in a manner he was accustomed to do when provoked, 'I *will* come to the bottom of this business. That several of you were in it, I feel sure. Is there not *one* of you sufficiently honest to speak, when required so to do?'

Certain of the boys drooped their conscious faces and their eyelids. As to Bill Simms, he felt fit to faint.

'What have you done with Charles Channing?' thundered the master. 'Where have you put him? Where is he gone? I command you to speak! Let the senior of those who were in it speak! or the consequences be upon your own heads.'

The threat sounded ominous in the ears of Bill Simms: he saw himself, in prospective, exposed to all the horrors of a dungeon, and to something worse. With a curious noise, something between a bark and a groan, he flung himself with his face on the floor, and lay there howling.

'Mr. Simms,' said the master, 'what has taken you? Were you the chief actor in this?'

All considerations had disappeared from Mr. Simms's mind, save the moment's terror. He

forgot what would be his own position in the school, if he told, or—as they would have expressed it—turned sneak. Impelled by fear, he was hardly conscious of his words; hardly responsible for them.

'It wasn't me,' he howled. 'They all know I didn't want the trick played upon him. I told them that it had killed a boy down by our farm, and it might kill Channing. They know it, they do.'

The master paused. 'Walk here, Simms.'

Simms picked himself up from the ground and walked there. A miserable object he looked; his eyes red, his teeth shaking, his face white, and his straw hair standing on end.

The master leaned his arms upon his desk, and brought his face nearly into contact with the frightened one. 'What trick did you play upon Charles Channing?'

''Twasn't me, sir,' sobbed Simms. 'I didn't want it done, I say. O-o-o-o-o-o-h! I didn't! I didn't!'

'What trick *was* played upon him?'

'It was a ghost dressed up to frighten him, and he passed through the cloisters and saw it. It wasn't me! I'll never speak again if it was me!'

'A ghost!' repeated the master in astonishment, while Ketch stretched his old neck forward,

and the most intense interest was displayed by the school.

'They did it with a sheet and a blue flame,' went on Simms; who, now that the ice was broken, tried to make a clean breast of it, and grew more alarmed every moment. 'It wasn't me! I didn't want it done, and I never lent a hand to the dressing up. If little Channing *is* dead, it won't be fair to hang me.'

'Who was in the plot?' was the next question of the master. And Simms enumerated them. The master, stern and grim, beckoned to the several gentlemen to walk up, and to range themselves before him. 'The lad has run some distance in his terror,' observed the master aside to Hamish, as he remembered what Judith had told him the previous night. 'You will see him home in the course of the day.'

'I trust we may!' replied Hamish, with marked emphasis.

Bit by bit, word by word, the master drew the whole truth from the downcast lads. Pierce senior looked dogged and obstinate: he was inwardly vowing unheard-of revenge against Mr. Simms. Probably most of them were doing the same.

'I knowed it was them! I knowed it couldn't be nobody but them!' broke forth old Ketch,

summarily interrupting the proceedings. 'You sees now, sir, what a incorrigible——'

'Silence!' said the master, raising his hand. 'I can deal with this without your assistance, Ketch. Hurst, who concocted this infamous plot?'

Hurst—who was the senior of the conspirators, with regard to his position in the school, though not so old as Pierce senior—could not answer it definitively. It was concocted between them, he said; not by one more than by another.

'Did you not know that a trick, such as this, has deprived *men* of reason?' continued the master. 'And you play it upon a young and defenceless boy! I am at a loss how to express my sense of your conduct. If any ill shall have happened to him through it, you will carry it on your consciences for ever.'

Remembering what they had just heard, the boys' consciences had begun to twitch already.

'Who personated the ghost?' continued the master.

'Pierce senior.' The answer came from Simms. The others would not have given it.

'I might have guessed that,' was the remark of the master, who had no great love for the gentleman named. 'I might have known that if there was a boy in the college school who would delight

to put himself forward to trample on one younger and more sensitive than himself, it would be Pierce senior. I'll give you something to remember this work, Mr. Pierce. Yorke!'

Gerald Yorke knew what he was called for. He was the tallest and strongest of all. The school knew; and a murmur of excitement went round. Pierce senior was going to be hoisted.

Only in very flagrant cases was the extreme punishment of flogging resorted to by the present master. It had been more common with his predecessor. Of course its rarity made it all the more impressive when it did come.

'Make ready,' said the master to Pierce senior, unlocking his desk and taking out a birch as big as a whole besom.

Pierce turned green and white, without help from any blue flame, and slowly began to obey. There might be no resistance. The school hushed itself into suspense, and Mr. Ketch's legs were on the point of taking a dance of ecstacy. A minute or two, and the group formed the centre of the upper part of the room; Yorke supporting the great boy whose back was bared, while the daunted faces and eager eyes were strained eagerly from around. The head-master took his place, and his birch was raised in the air to come down with a heavy stroke, when a commotion was heard at

one of the desks, and Stephen Bywater rushed forward.

'Stop, sir!' he said to the master. 'If you will let Pierce go, I will take the punishment.'

The master's arm with its weapon of war dropped powerless by his side, and he turned his astonished gaze upon Bywater.

'I had more to do with planning the trick than Pierce had, sir, so it's only just that I should be the scapegoat. We fixed upon Pierce to personate the ghost because he was tall and lanky. And a flogging is not much to my skin,' added honest, impudent Bywater.

'So *you* were the planner of it, were you, Mr Bywater?' demanded the angry master.

'In a great measure I was, sir. If I do go in for mischief, it shall not be said I let others suffer for it. Little Channing had offended me, and I wished to serve him out. But I never thought to do him harm.'

In the perplexity of deciding what he ought to do, when official proceedings were interrupted in this unprecedented way, the master hesitated. What he would have done is uncertain—flogged Pierce first and Bywater afterwards, perhaps—but at that moment there occurred another interruption, and a more serious one.

Diggs, the man who lived at the boat-house,

had entered the school, and was asking to speak to the head-master. Catching sight of the signs of the ceremony about to be performed, he waited for no permission, but went forward at once, a college cap in his hand, and his voice trembling with excitement. Its excitement was not lessened when he recognized Hamish Channing.

'I am the bearer of bad news, gentlemen,' he said, addressing them both. 'I fear one of the young college lads was drowned last night by my boat-house. We have picked up his cap this morning. It was poor little Master Channing.'

Hamish controlled his emotion better than did the Rev. Mr. Pye. The latter turned his eyes on the horrified school, himself equally horrified, and then signified to Pierce senior to dress himself—to Bywater to retire to his place. 'The affair has become serious,' he observed, 'and must be dealt with differently. Poor child! Poor little Channing!'

And the boys, in their emotion, broke into an echoing wail—'Poor little Channing! poor little Channing!'

CHAPTER III.

DRAGGING THE RIVER.

THE wailing echoes of lamentation were dying out in the high roof of the college school. Hamish Channing, pale, but calm and self-controlled, stood perfectly ready to investigate the account brought by the boat-house keeper of the drowning of Charles. The feelings of those who had had a hand in the work may be imagined, perhaps, but certainly cannot be described. Bill Simms choked and sobbed, and pulled his lanky straw hair, and kicked his legs about, and was altogether beside himself. The under-masters looked on with stern countenances and lowering brows; while old Ketch never had such a disappointment in all his life (the one grand disappointment of the previous night's supper excepted) as he was feeling now, at the putting off of the flogging.

Diggs, the boat-house keeper, was a widower, with one child, a girl of ten years old. His mother lived with him—an aged woman, confined to her

bed, of late, with rheumatic fever, from which she was slowly recovering. On the previous night Diggs was out, and the girl had been sent on an errand, Mrs. Diggs being left in the house alone. She was lying quietly, still as was the air outside, when sudden sounds broke that stillness, and smote upon her ear. Footsteps—young steps, they seemed—were heard to come tearing down on the outside gravel, from the direction of the cathedral, and descend the steps. Then there was a plunge into the river, and a startling cry.

The old woman echoed the cry; but there were none to hear it, and she was powerless to aid. That a human soul was struggling in the water was certain; and she called and called, but called in vain. She was shut up in the house, unable to move; and there were none outside to hear her. In her grief and distress she at length pulled the bed-clothes over her ears, that she might hear no more (if it was to be heard) of the death agony.

Twenty minutes or so, and then the girl came in. The old woman took her head from underneath the clothes, and stated what had occurred, and the girl went and looked at the river. But it was flowing along peacefully, showing no signs of anything of the sort having happened. Not a creature was on the path on either side, so far as her eyes could reach in the moonlight; and she

came to the conclusion that her grandmother must have been mistaken. 'She do have odd fancies,' said the child to herself, 'and thinks she hears things that nobody else never hears.'

At ten o'clock Diggs came home. Now, this man had a propensity to yield to an infirmity to which many others also yield—that of drinking too freely. It is true this did not often occur; but when it did happen, it was usually at a time when his services were especially required. It is very much the same in this world: we are apt to do things, whether good ones or bad ones, just at the wrong moment. Diggs arrived at home, stupid. His old mother called him to her room, and told him what she had heard; but she could make little impression upon him. As his young daughter had done, he took a survey of the river, he taking it only from the windows of his house—the girl had gone on to the bank—and then he tumbled into bed, and slept heavily until the morning.

Up betimes, he remembered what had been told to him, and went out of doors, half expecting possibly to see some corpse floating on the surface. 'I was detained out last night on an errand,' explained he to some three or four stragglers who had gathered round him, 'and when I got in, my old mother told me a cock-and-bull story of a cry

and a splash, as if somebody had fell into the river. It don't look much like it, though.'

'A dead dog, may be,' suggested one of the idlers. 'They be always a throwing rubbish into this river on the sly.'

'Who is?' sharply asked Diggs. 'They had better let me catch 'em at it!'

'Lots of folks is,' was the response. 'But if it was a dead dog, it couldn't well have cried out.'

Diggs went in-doors to his mother's chamber. 'What time was it, this tale of yours?' asked he.

'It was about half-past seven,' she answered. 'The half-hour chimed out from the college, just afore or just after, I forget which.' And then she related again what she knew he could not clearly comprehend over night: the fact of the fleet-sounding footsteps, and that they appeared to be young footsteps. 'If I didn't know the cloisters to be shut at that hour, I should ha' thought they come direct from the west door——'

The words were interrupted by a calling from below; and the man hastened down. A boy's cap—known, from its form, to belong to one of the collegiate scholars—had just been found under the lower bank, lodged in the mud. Then somebody *had* been drowned! and it was a college boy.

Where does a crowd collect from? I don't believe anybody can tell: but that we can't see

their descent, it might be supposed they dropped from the skies. Not three minutes after that trencher was picked up, the people were gathering thick and threefold, retired though the spot was; and it was at this time that Mr. Bill Simms had passed, and heard the tale which turned his heart and his face white.

Some time given to supposition, to comments, and to other gossip indigenous to an event of the sort, and then Mr. Diggs started for the college school with the cap. Another messenger ran to the Channings' house, the name in the cap showing to whom it had belonged. Diggs related the substance of this to the master, suppressing certain little points bearing upon himself.

Mr. Pye took the cap in his hand, and looked inside. The name, 'C. Channing,' was in Mrs. Channing's writing; and, in the sprawling hand of one of the school-boys—it looked like Bywater's —'Miss' had been added. Charley had scratched the addition over with strokes from a pen, but the word was distinct still.

'The river must be dragged, Diggs,' said Hamish Channing.

'The drags are being got ready now, sir. They'll be in, by the time I get back.'

Hamish strode to the door. Tom came up from his desk, showing some agitation, and

looked at the master. 'You will allow me to go, sir? I can do no good at my lessons in this suspense.'

'Yes,' replied the master. He was going himself.

The school rose with one accord. The undermasters rose. To think of study, in this excitement, was futile; and, in defiance of all precedent, the boys were allowed to quit the room, and troop down to the river. It was a race which should get there first; masters and boys ran together. The only one who walked pretty soberly was the headmaster. He had to uphold his dignity.

The drags were already in the river, and the banks were lined; police, friends, spectators, gentlemen, mob, and college boys, jostled each other. Arthur Channing, pale and agitated, came running from his home. The old vergers and bedesmen came; some of the clergy came; Judy came; and the dean came. Hamish, outwardly self-possessed, and giving his orders with quiet authority, was inwardly troubled as he had never been. The boy had been left to his charge, and how should he answer for this to his father and mother?

He went in and saw the old woman; as did the renowned Mr. Butterby, who had appeared with the rest. She related to them succinctly what

she had heard on the previous night. 'I could ha' told, without having heard it now, that it was the steps of a college boy,' she said. 'I don't listen so often to 'em that I need mistake. He seemed to be coming from the west door o' the cloisters—only that the cloisters be shut at night; so he may have come round by the front o' the college. Desperate quick he ran, and le'pt down the steps; and, a minute after, there was the splash and the cry, and the footsteps were heard no more. One might fancy that, in turning the corner to run along the towing-path, he had turned too quick, with too wide a sweep, and so fell over the bank.'

'Did you hear no noise afterwards?' questioned Hamish.

'I didn't. I called out, but nobody came anigh to answer it; and then I hid my ears. I was afraid, ye see.'

They left the old woman's bedside, and returned to the crowd on the bank. The dean quietly questioned Hamish about the facts, and shook his head when put in possession of them. 'I fear there is little hope,' he said.

'Very little. My father and mother's absence makes it the more distressing. I know not, Mr. Dean, how——'

Who was this, pushing vehemently up, to the

discomfiture of everybody, elbowing the dean with as little ceremony as he might have elbowed Ketch, thrusting aside Hamish, and looking down on the river with flashing eyes, with working nostrils? Who should it be, but Roland Yorke? for that was his usual way of pushing through a crowd; as you have heard before.

'Is it true?' he gasped. 'Is Charles Channing in the water?—sent there through the tricks of the college boys—of Tod?'

'There is little doubt of its truth, Roland,' was the answer of Hamish.

Roland said no more. Off went his coat, off went his waistcoat, off went other garments, leaving him nothing but his drawers and his shirt; and in he leaped impetuously, before anybody could stop him, and floundered away in the water, looking after Charles, paying no heed to the shouts that the drags would get hold of his legs.

* * * * *

But neither drags nor Roland could find Charles. The drags were continued in use, but there was no result. Very few had expected that there would be any result; the probability being that the current had carried the body down the stream. Hamish had been home to soothe the grief of his sisters—or rather to essay at soothing it—and then he came back again.

Roland, his ardour cooled, had likewise been home to exchange his wet things for dry ones. This done, he was flying out again, when he came upon the Reverend William Yorke, who was hastening down to the scene, in some agitation.

'Is the boy found, Roland, do you know? How did it happen? Did he fall in?'

'Considering the light in which you regard the family, William Yorke, I wonder you should waste your breath to ask about it,' was Roland's touchy answer, delivered with as much scorn as he could call up.

Mr. Yorke said no more, only quickened his pace towards the river. Roland kept up with him and continued talking.

'It's a good thing all the world's not of your opinion, William Yorke! You thought to put a slight upon Constance Channing when you told her she might go along, for you. It has turned out just the best luck that could have happened to her.'

'Be silent, sir,' said Mr. Yorke, his pale cheek flushing scarlet. 'I have already told you that I will not permit you to use Miss Channing's name to me. You have nothing to do with her or with me.'

'*You* have nothing to do with her, at any rate,' cried aggravating Roland. 'She'll soon belong to your betters, William Yorke.'

Mr. Yorke turned his flashing eye upon him, plainly asking the explanation that he would not condescend to ask in words. It gave Roland an advantage, and he went on swimmingly with his mischief.

'Lord Carrick has seen the merits of Constance, if you have not; and—I don't mind telling it you in confidence—has resolved to make her his wife. He says she's the prettiest girl he has seen for ages.'

'It is not true,' said Mr. Yorke, haughtily.

'Not true!' returned Roland. 'You'll see whether it's true or not, when she's Countess of Carrick. Lady Augusta was present when he made her the offer. He was half afraid to make it for some time, he told us, as he was getting on in years, and had grey hair. Halloa! you are turning yellow, William Yorke. She *can't* be anything to you! You threw her away, you know.'

William Yorke, vouchsafing no reply, got away from his tormentor. He probably did look yellow; certainly he felt so. Roland indulged in a quiet laugh. He had been waiting for this opportunity, ever since he became cognizant of what had taken place between the earl and Constance. The earl had made no secret of his intention and its defeat. 'I'll have some fun over it with Mr. William,' had been Roland's thought.

A sudden noise! Cries and shouts on the banks of the river, and the dense crowd swayed about with excitement. Mr. Yorke and Roland set off to run, each from his different point, and the cries took a distinct sound as they neared them.

'They have found the body!'

It was being laid then upon the bank. Those who could get near tried to obtain a glimpse of it. The college boys, with white faces and terror-stricken consciences, fought for a place; Roland Yorke fought for it; the head-master fought for it: I am not sure that the bishop—who had seen the commotion from his palace windows, and came up to know what it meant—did not fight for it.

A false alarm, so far as the present object was concerned. A little lad, who had been drowned more than a week before, had turned up now. He had incautiously climbed on the parapet of the bridge, whence he fell into the water, and their search for him had hitherto been fruitless. He was not a pleasant sight to look upon, as he lay there; but the relief to certain of the college boys, when they found it was not Charles, was immeasurable. Bywater's spirits went up to some of their old impudence-heat. 'In looking for one thing you find another,' quoth he.

Very true, Mr. Bywater! Sometimes we find more than we bargain for. The drags were thrown

in again, and the excited crowd jostled each other as before, their faces hanging over the brink. Hush! Hark! Another prize! What is it, coming up now?

A rare prize, this time! The drags pulled and tugged, and the men cried, 'Heave-ho!' and the hundred and one voices echoed it: 'Heave-ho! heave-ho!' Hush! Hush—sh—sh! A breathless minute of suspense, and up it comes. Amid straw and tangled weeds and mud, and the odds and ends that a river's waters will collect, something hard and clanking was thrown upon the bank, and wondering eyes and faces peered over it.

Nothing but a pair of keys. A pair of large rusty keys, tied together by a string. Bywater, and Hurst, and young Galloway, and one or two more, cast significant glances together, and were nearly choking with fright and suppressed laughter. One, standing there, conspicuous for his dress, which among other items comprised an apron, turned a significant glance on *them*. Bold Bywater met it, and looked a little less bold than usual. But the prelate had kept counsel, and meant to keep it; and he looked away again.

Once more were the drags thrown into the water. Once more the mob, gentle and simple, hustled on its brink. When the college bell tolled out for morning prayers, those, whose duty

it was to attend the cathedral, drew themselves away unwillingly. Arthur Channing was one. Whatever might be his grief, his suspense, obligations must be fulfilled.

Later in the day, when the search was over—for it was deemed useless to continue it—and when hope was over, a council was held at Mr. Channing's house. Mr. and Mrs. Channing must be acquainted with this sad business; but how was it to be done? By letter? by telegraph? or by a special messenger? Constance had suggested writing, and silently hoped that Hamish would take the task upon himself, for she felt nearly unequal to it, in her dire distress. Mr. Galloway, who had been in and out all the morning, suggested the telegraph. Hamish approved of neither, but proposed to despatch Arthur, to make the communication in person.

'I cannot leave Helstonleigh myself,' he said; 'therefore it must devolve upon Arthur. Of course, his journey will be an expense; but there are times when expense must not be regarded. I consider this one.'

'A letter would go quicker,' said Mr. Galloway.

'Scarcely, in these days of fast travelling,' was the reply of Hamish. 'But that is not the question. A letter, let it be ever so explanatory, will only put them in suspense. As soon as they have

read it, five hundred questions will suggest themselves that they will wish to ask; and, to wait to have them satisfied, will be intolerable, especially to my mother. Arthur's going will obviate this. He knows as much as we know, and can impart his knowledge to them.'

'There is a great deal in what you say,' mused Mr. Galloway.

'I am sure there is,' spoke Constance through her tears, 'though it did not strike me previously. In mamma's anxiety and suspense, she might start for home, to learn details.'

'And I think it is what she would do,' said Hamish, 'if not my father also. It will be better that Arthur should go. He can tell them all they would learn if they came home; and, so far as it can be, that would be satisfactory.'

They were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Huntley and his daughter. Ellen had begged her father, when she found he was going to the Channings', to allow her to accompany him, and see Constance in her distress. Mr. Huntley readily acquiesced. The drowning of poor Charley was a serious affliction, in contemplation of which he forgot the ineligibility of her meeting Hamish.

Hamish did not appear to perceive any ineligibility in the matter. He was the first to take Ellen's hand in his, and bend upon her his sweet

smile of welcome. Knowing what Ellen did know of Mr. Huntley's sentiments, and that he was looking on, it rendered her manner confused and her cheeks crimson. She was glad to turn to Constance, and strive to say a few words of sympathy. 'Had Harry been one of those wicked, thoughtless boys to join in this ghost trick, I could never have forgiven him!' she impulsively exclaimed, the hot tears running down her cheeks.

The subject under consideration was referred to Mr. Huntley, and his opinion requested: more as a form of courtesy than anything, for Hamish had made up his mind upon the point. A thoroughly affectionate, dutiful son was Hamish Channing; and he believed that the tidings could be rendered more bearable to his father and mother by a messenger being sent, than they could be by any other mode of communication. The excuse that Constance and Arthur had, throughout, found for Hamish in their hearts was, that he had taken the bank-note, out of latent affection to Mr. and Mrs. Channing.

'You are wrong, every one of you,' said Mr. Huntley, when he had listened to what they had to say. 'You must send neither letter nor messenger. It will not do.'

Hamish looked at him. 'Then what can we send, sir?'

'Don't send at all.'

'Not send at all!' repeated Hamish.

'Certainly not,' said Mr. Huntley. 'You have no positive proof yet that the child is dead. It will be alarming them unnecessarily.'

'Mr. Huntley!' said Constance. 'Is it possible that you see grounds for hope?'

'Honestly to confess it, my dear, I do not see much ground for hope,' he replied. 'But, on the other hand, there are no positive grounds for despair. So long as you have not these grounds furnished, I say, keep it from Mr. and Mrs. Channing. Answer me one thing: What good end would it serve, the telling them?'

'Is it not a duty?'

'I do not see it,' said Mr. Huntley. 'Were the poor boy's fate known, beyond uncertainty, it would be a different matter. If you send and tell them all there is to tell, what would come of it?' The very suspense, the doubt, would have a bad effect. It might bring Mr. Channing home; and the good, already effected, might be driven back again—his time, his purse, his hopes, that he has given to the journey, wasted. Allowing that he still remained, the news might check his cure. No: my strong advice to you is, Suffer them for the present to remain in ignorance.'

Hamish began to think Mr. Huntley might be right.

'I know I am right,' said Mr. Huntley. 'If the putting them in possession of the facts could be productive of any benefit to themselves, to you, or to Charles, I'd go off myself with Arthur this hour. But it could effect nothing; and, to them, it might result in ill. Until we know something more certain ourselves, let us keep it from them.'

'Yes, I see it,' said Hamish, warmly. 'It will be best so.'

Constance felt her arm touched, and coloured with emotion when she found it was done by the Reverend Mr. Yorke. In this day of distress, people seemed to come in and go out without ceremony. Mr. Yorke had entered with Tom Channing. He entirely took up the new view of the matter, and strongly advised that it should not be allowed to reach Mr. and Mrs. Channing.

Mr. Galloway, when he was departing, beckoned Constance into the hall. It was only to give her a private word of friendly sympathy, of advice—not to be overwhelmed, to cling to hope. She thanked him, but it was with an aching heart, for Constance could not feel this hope.

'Will you grant me the favour of a minute's private interview?' asked Mr. Yorke stiffly, meeting her in the hall.

Constance hesitated for a moment. He was asking what she felt he had no right to ask.

She coloured, bowed, and stepped towards the drawing-room. Mr. Yorke threw open the door for her, and followed her in.

Then he became agitated. Whatever his pride or his temper may have been, whether the parting between them was his fault or Constance's, it was certain that he loved her with an enduring love. Until that morning he had never contemplated the losing Constance; he had surely looked forward to some indefinite future when she should be his; and the words spoken by Roland had well nigh driven him mad. Which was precisely what Mr. Roland hoped they would do.

'I would not speak to you on this day, when you are in distress, when you may deem it an unfitting time for me to speak,' he began, 'but I *cannot* live in this suspense. Let me confess that, what brought me here, was to obtain this interview with you, quite as much as this other unhappy business. You will forgive my speaking to-day.'

'Mr. Yorke, I do not know what you can have to speak of,' she answered, with dignity. 'My distress is great, but I can hear what you wish to say.'

'I heard—I heard'—he spoke with emotion, and went plunging abruptly into his subject—'I heard this morning that Lord Carrick was soliciting you to become his wife.'

Constance could have laughed, but for her own distress, agitated though he was. 'Well, sir?' she coldly said, in a little spirit of mischief.

'Constance, you cannot do it,' he passionately retorted. 'You cannot so perjure yourself!'

'Mr. Yorke! Have you the right to tell me I shall or shall not marry Lord Carrick?'

'You can't do it, Constance!' he repeated, laying his hand upon her shoulder, and speaking hoarsely. 'You know that your whole affection was given to me! It is mine still; I feel it is. You have not transferred it to another in this short time. You do not love and forget so lightly.'

'Is this all you have to say to me?'

'No, it is not all,' he answered, with emotion. 'I want you to be *my* wife, Constance, not his. I want you to forget this miserable estrangement that has come between us, and come home to me at Hazledon.'

'Listen, Mr. Yorke,' she said: but it was with the utmost difficulty she retained her indifferent manner, and kept her tears from falling: she would have liked to be taken then to his sheltering arms, never to have quitted them. 'The cause which led to our parting, was that suspicion that fell upon Arthur, coupled with something that you were not pleased with in my own manner, relating to it. That suspicion is upon him still; and my

course of conduct would be precisely the same, were it to come over again. I am sorry you should have reaped up this matter, for it can only end as it did before.'

'Will you not marry me?' he resumed.

'No. So long as circumstances look dark on my brother.'

'Constance! that may be for ever!'

'Yes,' she sadly answered, knowing what she did know; 'they may never be brighter than they are now. Were I tempted to become your wife, you might reproach me afterwards for allying you to disgrace; and that, I think, would kill me. I *beg* you not to speak of this again.'

'And you refuse me for Lord Carrick! You will go and marry him!' exclaimed Mr. Yorke, struggling between reproach, affection, and temper.

'You must allow me to repeat that you have no right to question me,' she said, moving to the door. 'When our engagement was forfeited, that right was forfeited with it.'

She opened the door to quit the room. Mr. Yorke might have wished further to detain her, but Judy came bustling up. 'Lady Augusta's here, Miss Constance.'

Lady Augusta Yorke met Constance in the hall, seizing both her hands. 'I had a bad headache, and lay in bed, and never heard of it till an hour

ago!' she uttered with the same sort of impulsive kindness that sometimes actuated Roland. 'Is it true that he is drowned? Is it true that Tod was in it?—Gerald says he was. William, are *you* here?'

Constance took Lady Augusta into the general sitting-room, into the presence of the rest of her guests. Lady Augusta asked a hundred questions, at the least; and they made her acquainted with the different points, so far as they were cognizant of them. She declared that Tod should be kept upon bread and water for a week, and she would go to the school and request Mr. Pye to flog him. She overwhelmed Constance with kindness, wishing she and Annabel would come to her house and remain entirely for a few days. Constance thanked her, and found some difficulty in being allowed to refuse.

'Here is his exercise book,' observed Constance, the tears filling her eyes; 'here is the very place where he laid his pen. Every other minute I think it cannot be true that he is gone—that it must be all a dream.'

Lady Augusta took up the pen and kissed it: it was her way of showing sympathy. Mr. Huntley smiled. 'Where's William gone?' asked Lady Augusta.

The Reverend William Yorke had quitted the

house, shaking the dust from his shoes, in anger, as he crossed the threshold. Anger as much at himself, for having ever given her up, as at Constance Channing; and still most at the Right Honourable the Earl of Carrick.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. JENKINS IN A DILEMMA.

I DON'T know what you will say to me for introducing you into the privacy of Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins's bed-chamber, but it is really necessary. We cannot very well get along without it.

A conjugal dispute had occurred that morning when Mrs. Jenkins got up. She was an early riser; as was Jenkins also, in a general way; but since his illness, he had barely contrived to get down in time for breakfast. On this morning—which was not the one following the application of mustard to his chest, but one about a week subsequent to that medicinal operation—Mrs. Jenkins, upon preparing to descend, peremptorily ordered him to remain in bed. Nothing need be recorded of the past week, save two facts: Charles Channing had not been discovered, either in life or in death; and the Earl of Carrick had terminated his visit, and left Helstonleigh.

'I'll bring your breakfast up,' said Mrs. Jenkins.

'It is of no use to say that,' Jenkins ventured meekly to remonstrate. 'You know I must get up.'

'I say you shall not get up. Here you are, growing weaker and worse every day, and yet you won't take care of yourself! Where's the use of your taking a bottle a-day of cough mixture—where's the use of your making the market scarce of cod-liver oil—where's the use of wasting good mustard, if it's all to do you no good? *Does* it do you any good?'

'I am afraid it has not, as yet,' confessed Jenkins.

'And never will, so long as you give your body and brains no rest. Out you go by nine o'clock, in all weathers, ill or well, and there you are at your business till evening; stooping yourself double over the writing, dancing abroad on errands, wearing out your lungs with answering callers! There's no common sense in it.'

'But, my dear, the office must be attended to,' said Jenkins, with much deference.

'There's no "must" in the case, as far as you are concerned. If I say you shan't go to it, why, you shan't. What's the office, pray, in comparison with a man's life?'

'But I am not so ill as to remain away. I can go yet, and do my work.'

'You'd be for going, if you were in your coffin,

you would!' was Mrs. Jenkins's wrathful answer. 'Could you do any good then, pray?'

'But I am not in my coffin,' mildly suggested Jenkins.

'Don't I say you'd be for going if you were?' reiterated Mrs. Jenkins, who sometimes, in her heat, lost sight of the precise point under dispute. 'You know you would! you know I have told you so before! you know there's nothing in the whole world that you think of, but that office! Office—office—office, it is with you from morning till night. When you *are* in your coffin, through it, you'll be satisfied.'

'But it is my duty to go as long as I can, my dear.'

'It's my duty to do a many things that I don't do!' was the answer; 'and one of my duties which I haven't done yet, is to keep you in-doors for a bit, and nurse you up. I shall begin it from to-day, and see if I can't get you well, that way.'

'But——'

'Hold your tongue, Jenkins. I never say a thing but you are sure to put in a "but." You lie in bed this morning,—do you hear?—and I'll bring up your breakfast.'

Mrs. Jenkins quitted the room with the last order, and that ended the discussion. Had Jenkins been a free agent—free from business

obligations—he had been only too glad to obey her. In his present state of health, the work of the office had become almost too much for him; it was with difficulty that he went to it and did his duty there. Even the walk, short as it was, in the early morning, was nearly beyond his strength; even the rising betimes was beginning to tell upon him. And though he had little hope that nursing himself up in-doors would prove of essential service, he felt that the *rest* it brought would be to him an inestimable boon.

But Jenkins was one who thought of duty before he thought of himself; and, therefore, to remain away from the office, if he *could* drag himself to it, appeared to him little less than a sin. He was paid for his time and services—fairly paid—liberally paid, some might have said—and they belonged to his master. But it was not so much from this point of view that Jenkins regarded the necessity of going—conscientious though he was—as at the thought of what the office would do without him, there being nobody to replace him but Roland Yorke. Jenkins knew what he was: and so do we.

To lie in bed, or remain in-doors, under these circumstances, Jenkins felt to be impossible; and when his watch gave him warning that the breakfast hour was approaching, up he got. Behold

him sitting on the side of the bed, essaying to dress himself — *essaying* to do it. Never had Jenkins felt feebler, or weaker, or less able to cope with his increasing illness, than on this morning; and when Mrs. Jenkins dashed in—for her quick ears had caught, downstairs, the sounds of his stirring—he sat there still, stockings in hand, unable to help himself.

'So you were going to trick me, were you! Are you not ashamed of yourself, Jenkins?'

Jenkins gasped twice before he could reply. A giddiness seemed to be stealing over him, as it had done that other evening, underneath the elm trees. 'My dear, it is of no use your talking; I *must* go to the office,' he gasped out.

'You shan't go—if I lock you up! There!'

Jenkins was spared the trouble of a reply. The giddiness had increased to faintness, his sight left him, and he fell back on the bed in a state of unconsciousness. Mrs. Jenkins rather regarded it as a triumph. She pushed him into bed, and tucked him up.

'This comes of your attempting to disobey me!' said she, when he came round again. 'I wonder what would become of you poor, soft mortals of men, if you were let have your own way! There's no office for you to-day, Jenkins.'

Very peremptorily spoke she. But, lest he

should attempt the same again, she determined to put it out of his power. Opening a closet, she thrust every article of his clothing into it, not leaving him so much as a waistcoat, turned the key, and put it into her pocket; poor Jenkins watching her with despairing eyes, and not venturing to remonstrate.

'There,' said she, speaking amiably in her glow of satisfaction, 'you can go to the office now—if you like. I'll not stop you; but you'll have to march through the streets leaving your clothes in that closet.'

Under these difficulties, Jenkins did not entirely see his way clear to get there. Mrs. Jenkins went instead, catching Mr. Roland Yorke just upon his arrival.

'What's up, that Jenkins is not here?' began free Roland, before she could speak.

'Jenkins is not in a fit state to get out of his bed, and I have come to tell Mr. Galloway so,' replied she.

Roland Yorke's face grew to twice its usual length at the news. 'I say, though, that will never do, Mrs. Jenkins! What's to become of this office?'

'The office must do the best it can without him. *He's* not coming to it.'

'*I* can't manage it,' said Roland, in considerable

consternation. 'I should go dead, if I had to do Jenkins's work, and my own as well.'

'He'll go dead, unless he takes some rest in time, and gets a little good nursing. I should like to know how I am to nurse him, if he's down here all day?'

'That's not the question,' returned Roland, feeling uncommonly blank. 'The question is, how the office, and I, and Galloway are to get along without him? Couldn't he come in a sedan?'

'Yes, he can; if he likes to come without his clothes,' retorted Mrs. Jenkins. 'I have taken care to lock *them* up.'

'Locked his clothes up!' repeated Roland, in wonder. 'What's that for?'

'Because, as long as he has got a bit of life in him, he'll use it to drag himself down here,' answered Mrs. Jenkins, tartly. 'That's why. He was getting up to come this morning, defying me, and every word I said to him against it, when he fell down on the bed in a fainting fit. I thought it time to lock his things up then.'

'Upon my word, I don't know what's to be done,' resumed Roland, growing quite hot with dismay and perplexity at the prospect of some extra work for himself. 'Look here!' exhibiting the parchments on Jenkins's desk, all so neatly left—'here's an array! Jenkins did not intend to stay away, when he left those last night, I know.'

'*He* intend to stay away! catch him thinking of it!' retorted Mrs. Jenkins. 'It is as I have just told him—that he'd come in his coffin. And it's my firm belief that if he knew a week's holiday would save him from his coffin, he'd not take it, unless I was at his back to make him. It's well he has got somebody to look after him that's not quite deficient of common sense!'

'Well, this is a plague!' grumbled Roland.

'So it is—for me, I know, if for nobody else,' was Mrs. Jenkins's reply. 'But there's some plagues in the world that we must put up with, and make the best of, whether we like 'em or not; and this is one. You'll tell Mr. Galloway, please; it will save me waiting.'

However, as Mrs. Jenkins was departing, she encountered Mr. Galloway, and told him herself. He was both vexed and grieved to hear it; grieved on Jenkins's score, vexed on his own. That Jenkins was growing very ill, he believed from his own observation, and it could not have happened at a more untoward time. Involuntarily, Mr. Galloway's thoughts turned to Arthur Channing, and he wished he had him in the office still.

'You must turn over a new leaf from this very hour, Roland Yorke,' he observed to that gentleman, when he entered. 'We must both of us buckle-to, if we are to get through the work.'

'It's not possible, sir, that I can do Jenkins's share and mine,' said Roland.

'If you only do Jenkins's, I'll do yours,' replied Mr. Galloway, significantly. 'Understand me, Roland: I shall expect you to show yourself equal to this emergency. Put aside frivolity and idleness, and apply yourself in earnest. Jenkins has been in the habit of taking part of your work upon himself, like I believe no clerk living would have done; and, in return, you must now take his. I hope in a few days he may be with us again. Poor fellow, we shall find his loss!'

Mr. Galloway had to go out in the course of the morning, and Roland was left alone to the cares and work of the office. It occurred to him that, as a preliminary step, he could not do better than put the window open, that the sight of people passing (especially any of his acquaintance with whom he might exchange greetings) should cheer him on at his hard work. Accordingly, he threw it up to its utmost extent, and went on with his writing, giving alternately one look to his task, and two to the street. Not many minutes had he been thus spurring on his industry, when he saw Arthur Channing pass.

'Hist—st—st!' called out Roland, by way of attracting his attention. 'Come in, old fellow, will you? Here's such a game!'

CHAPTER V.

A NEW SUSPICION.

Arthur Channing had been walking leisurely down Close-street. His time hung heavily on his hands. In quitting the cathedral after morning service, he had joined Mr. Harper, the lay clerk, and went with him, talking, towards the town; partly because he had nothing to do elsewhere—partly because out of doors appeared more desirable than home. In the uncertain state of suspense they were kept in, respecting Charles, the minds of all, from Hamish down to Annabel, were in a constant state of unrest. When they rose in the morning the first thought was, 'Shall we hear of Charles to-day?' When they retired at bed time, it was, 'What may not the river give up this night?' It appeared to themselves that they were continually expecting tidings of some sort or other; and, with this expectation, hope would sometimes be mingled. Hope! where could it spring from? The only faint suspicion of it, indulged at first, that Charley had been rescued in some providential manner,

and conveyed to a house of shelter, had had time to die out. A few houses there were, half-concealed near the river, like there are near most other rivers of traffic, which the police trusted just as far as they could see, and whose inmates did not boast of shining reputations; but the police had overhauled these thoroughly, and found no trace of Charley. Nor was it likely that they would conceal a child. So long as Charles's positive fate remained a mystery, suspense could not cease; and with this suspense there did mingle some faint glimmer of hope. Suspense urges to exertion; inaction is intolerable to it. Hamish, Arthur, Tom, all would rather be out of doors now, than in; there might be something to be heard of, some information to be met, and the looking after it was better than the staying at home to wait for it. No wonder, then, that Arthur Channing's steps would bend of their own accord towards the town, when he left the cathedral morning and afternoon.

It was in passing Mr. Galloway's office, the window of which stood wide open, that Arthur had found himself called to by Roland Yorke.

'What is it?' he asked, halting at the window.

'You are the very chap I wanted to see,' cried out Roland. 'Come in! Don't be afraid of meeting Galloway: he's off somewhere.'

The prospect of meeting Mr. Galloway would

not have prevented Arthur from entering. He was conscious of no wrong, and he did not shrink as though he had committed it. He went in, and Mr. Harper proceeded on his way.

'Here's a go!' was Roland's salutation. 'Jenkins is laid up.'

It was nothing but what Arthur had expected. He, like Mr. Galloway, had observed Jenkins growing ill and more ill. 'How shall you manage without him?' asked Arthur; Mr. Galloway's dilemma being the first thing that occurred to his mind.

'Who's to know?' answered Roland, who was in an explosive temper; '*I* don't. If Galloway thinks to put it all on my back, it's a scandalous shame! I never could do it, or the half of it. Jenkins worked like a horse when we were busy. He'd hang his head down over his desk, and never lift it for two hours at a stretch!—you know he would not. Fancy my doing that! I should get brain fever before a week was out.'

Arthur smiled at this. 'Is Jenkins much worse?' he inquired.

'I don't believe he's worse at all,' returned Roland, tartly. 'He'd have come this morning, as usual, fast enough, only she locked up his clothes.'

'Who?' said Arthur, in surprise.

'She. That agreeable lady who has the felicity of owning Jenkins. She was here this morning as large as life, giving an account of her doings, without a blush. She locked up his things, she says, to keep him in bed. I'd trick her, I know, were I Jenkins. I'd put on her flounces, but what I'd come out, if I wanted to. Rather short they'd be, for him.'

'I shall go, Roland. My being here only hinders you.'

'As if that made any difference worth counting! Look here!—piles and piles of parchments! I and Galloway could never get through them, hindered or not hindered. *I* am not going to work over hours! *I* won't kill myself with labour; There's Port Natal, thank goodness, if the screw does get put upon me too much!'

Arthur made no reply. It made little difference to Roland: whether encouraged or not, talk he would.

'I *have* heard of folks being worked beyond their strength; and that will be my case, if one may judge by present appearances. It's too bad of Jenkins!'

Arthur spoke up: he did not like to hear blame, even from Roland Yorke, cast upon hard-working, patient Jenkins. 'You should not say it, Roland It is not Jenkins's fault.'

'It is his fault. What does he have such a wife for? She keeps Jenkins under her thumb, just as Galloway keeps me. She locked up his clothes, and then told him he might come here without them, if he liked: my belief is, she'll be sending him so, some day. Jenkins ought to put her down. He's big enough.'

'He would be sure to come here, if he were equal to it,' said Arthur.

'He! Of course he would!' angrily retorted Roland. 'He'd crawl here on all fours, but what he'd come; only she won't let him. She knows it, too. She said this morning that he'd come when he was in his coffin! I should like to see it arrive!'

Arthur had been casting a glance at the papers. They were unusually numerous, and he began to think with Roland—that he and Mr. Galloway would not be able to get through them unaided. Most certainly they would not, at Roland's present rate of work. 'It is a pity you are not a quick copyist,' he said.

'I dare say it is!' sarcastically rejoined Roland, beginning to play at ball with the wafer-box. 'I never was made for work; and if——'

'You will have to do it, though, sir,' thundered Mr. Galloway, who had come up, and was enjoying a survey of affairs through the open window. Mr Roland, somewhat taken to, dropped his head and

the wafer-box together, and went on with his writing as meekly as poor Jenkins would have done; and Mr. Galloway entered.

'Good day,' said he to Arthur, shortly enough.

'Good day, sir,' was the response. Mr. Galloway turned to his idle clerk.

'Roland Yorke, you must either work, or say you will not. There is no time for playing and fooling; no time, sir! do you hear? Who put that window stark staring open?'

'I did, sir,' said incorrigible Roland. 'I thought the office might be the better for a little air, when there was so much to do in it.'

Mr. Galloway shut it with a bang. Arthur, who would not leave without some attempt at a passing courtesy, let it be ever so slight, made a remark to Mr. Galloway, that he was sorry to hear Jenkins was worse.

'He is so much worse,' was the response of Mr. Galloway, spoken sharply, for the edification of Roland Yorke, 'that I doubt whether he will ever enter this room again. Yes, sir, you may look; but it is the truth!'

Roland did look, looked with considerable consternation. 'How on earth will the work get done, then?' he muttered. With all his grumbling, he had not contemplated Jenkins being away more than a day or two.

'I do not know how it will get done, considering that the clerk upon whom I have to depend is Roland Yorke,' answered Mr. Galloway, with severity. 'One thing appears pretty evident, that Jenkins will not be able to help to do it.'

Mr. Galloway, more perplexed at the news brought by Mrs. Jenkins than he had let appear (for, although he chose to make a show of depending upon Roland, he knew how much dependence there was in reality to be placed upon him—none better), had deemed it advisable to see Jenkins personally, and judge for himself of his state of health. Accordingly, he proceeded thither, and arrived at an inopportune moment for his hopes. Jenkins was just recovering from a second fainting fit, and he appeared altogether so ill, so debilitated, that Mr. Galloway was struck with dismay. There would be no more work from Jenkins—as he believed—for him. He mentioned this now in his own office, and Roland received it with blank consternation.

An impulse came to Arthur, and he spoke upon it. 'If I can do you any good, sir, in this emergency, you have only to command me.'

'What sort of good?' asked Mr. Galloway.

Arthur pointed to the parchments. 'I could draw out these deeds, and any others that may follow them. My time is my own, sir, save the

two hours devoted to the cathedral, and I am at a loss how to occupy it. I have been idle ever since I left you.'

'Why don't you get into an office?' said Mr. Galloway.

Arthur's colour deepened. 'Because, sir, nobody will take me.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Galloway, drily, 'a good name is easier lost than gained.'

'Yes, it is,' freely replied Arthur. 'However, sir, to return to the question. I shall be glad to help you, if you have no one better at hand. I could devote several hours a day to it, and you know that I am thoroughly competent to be trusted with the work. I might take some home now.'

'Home!' returned Mr. Galloway. 'Did you mean that you could do it at home?'

'Certainly, sir, I did not think of doing it here,' was the pointed reply of Arthur. 'I can do it at home just as well as I could here; perhaps better, for I should shut myself up alone, and there would be nothing to interrupt me, or to draw off my attention.'

It cannot be denied that this was a most welcome proposition to Mr. Galloway; indeed, his thoughts had turned to Arthur at the first. Arthur would be far preferable to a strange clerk, looked for and brought in on the spur of the moment—

one who might answer well or answer ill, according to chance. Yet that such must have been his resource, Mr. Galloway knew.

'It will be an accommodation to me, your taking part of the work,' he frankly said. 'But you had better come to the office and do it.'

'No, sir, I would rather ——'

'Do, Channing!' cried out Roland Yorke, springing up as if he were electrified. 'The office will be bearable if you come back again.'

'I would prefer to do it at home, sir,' continued Arthur to Mr. Galloway, while that gentleman pointed imperiously to Yorke, as a hint to him to hold his tongue and mind his own business.

'You *may* come back here and do it,' said Mr. Galloway.

'Thank you, I cannot come back,' was the reply of Arthur.

'Of course you can't!' said angry Roland, who cared less for Mr. Galloway's displeasure than he did for displaying his own feelings when they were aroused. 'You won't, you mean! I'd not show myself such a duff as you, Channing, if I were paid in gold to do it!'

'You'll get paid in something presently, Roland Yorke, but it won't be in gold!' reproved Mr. Galloway. 'You will do a full day's work to-day, sir, if you stop here till twelve o'clock at night.'

'Oh, of course I look out to do that, sir,' retorted Roland, in a fume. 'Considering what's before me, on this desk and on Jenkins's, there's little prospect of my getting home on this side four in the morning. They needn't sit up for me; I can go in with the milk. I wonder who invented writing? I wish I had the fingering of him just now!'

Arthur turned to the parchments. He was nearly as much at home with them as Jenkins. Mr. Galloway selected two that were most pressing, and gave them to him, with the requisite materials for copying. 'You will keep them secure, you know,' he remarked.

'Perfectly so, sir; I shall sit quite alone.'

He carried them off with alacrity. Mr. Galloway's face cleared as he looked after him, and he made a remark aloud, expressive of his satisfaction. 'There's some pleasure in giving out work when you know it will be done. No play—no dilatoriness—finished to the minute that it's looked for! You should take a leaf out of his book, Yorke.'

'Yes, sir,' freely answered Roland. 'When you drove Arthur Channing out of this office, you parted with the best clerk you ever had. Jenkins is all very well for work, but he is nothing but a muff in other things. Arthur's a gentleman, and

he'd have served you well. Jenkins himself says so. He is honourable, he is honest, he——'

'I know enough of your sentiments with respect to his honesty,' interrupted Mr. Galloway. 'We need not go over that tale again.'

'I hope everybody knows them,' rejoined Roland. 'I have never concealed my opinion that the accusation was infamous; that, of all of us in this office, from its head down to Jenkins, none was less likely to finger the note than Arthur Channing. But of course my opinion goes for nothing.'

'You are bold, young man.'

'I fear it is my nature to be so, sir,' cried free Roland. 'If it ever should turn up how the note went, you'll be sorry, no doubt, for having visited it upon Arthur. Mr. Channing will be sorry; the precious magistrates will be sorry; that blessed dean, who wanted to turn him from the college, will be sorry. Not a soul of them but believes him guilty; and I hope they'll be brought to repentance for it, in sackcloth and ashes.'

'Go on with your work,' said Mr. Galloway, angrily.

Roland made a show of obeying. But his tongue was like a steam-engine: once set going, it couldn't readily be stopped; and he presently looked up again.

'I am not uncharitable; at least, to individuals. I always said the post-office helped itself to the note, and I'd lay my last half-crown upon it. But there *are* people in the town who think it could only have gone in another way. You'd go into a passion with me, sir, perhaps, if I mentioned it.'

Mr. Galloway—it has been before mentioned that he possessed an unbounded amount of curiosity, and also a propensity to gossip—so far forgot the force of good example as to ask Roland what he meant. Roland wanted no better encouragement.

'Well, sir, there are people who, weighing well all the probabilities of the case, have come to the conclusion that the note could only have been abstracted from the letter by the person to whom it was addressed. None but he broke the seal of it.'

'Do you allude to my cousin, Mr. Robert Galloway?' ejaculated Mr. Galloway as soon as indignation and breath allowed him to speak.

'Others do,' said Roland. 'I say it was the post-office.'

'How dare you repeat so insolent a suspicion to my face, Roland Yorke?'

'I said I should catch it!' cried Roland, speaking partly to himself. 'I am sure to get in for it,

one way or another, do what I will. It's not my fault, sir, if I have heard it spoken in the town.'

'Apply yourself to your work, sir, and hold your tongue. If you say another word, Roland Yorke, I shall feel inclined also to turn you away, as one idle and incorrigible, of whom nothing can be made.'

'Wouldn't it be a jovial excuse for Port Natal!' exclaimed Roland, but not in the hearing of his master, who had gone into his own room in much wrath. Roland laughed aloud; there was nothing he enjoyed so much as to be in opposition to Mr. Galloway; it had been better for the advancement of that gentleman's work, had he habitually kept a tighter rein over his pupil. It was perfectly true, however, that the new phase of suspicion, regarding the loss of the note, had been spoken in the town, and Roland only repeated what he had heard.

Apparently, Mr. Galloway did not like this gratuitous suggestion. He presently came back again. A paper was in his hand, and he began comparing it with one on Roland's desk. 'Where did you hear that unjustifiable piece of scandal?' he inquired, as he was doing it.

'The first person I heard speak of it was my mother, sir. She came home one day from call-

ing upon people, and said she had heard it somewhere. And it was talked of at Knivett's last night. He had a bachelors' party, and the subject was brought up. Some of us ridiculed the notion; others thought it might have grounds.'

'And pray, which did you favour?' sarcastically asked Mr. Galloway.

'I? I said then, as I have said all along, that there was nobody to thank for it but the post-office. If you ask me, sir, who first set the notion afloat in the town, I cannot satisfy you. All I know is, the rumour is circulating.'

'If I could discover the primary author of it, I would take legal steps to punish him,' warmly concluded Mr. Galloway.

'I'd help,' said undaunted Roland. 'Some fun might arise out of that.'

Mr. Galloway carried the probate of a will to his room, and sat down to examine it. But his thoughts were elsewhere. This suspicion, mentioned by Roland Yorke, had laid hold of his mind most unpleasantly, in spite of his show of indignation before Roland. He had no cause to deem his cousin otherwise than honest; it was next to impossible to suppose he could be guilty of playing him such a trick; but somehow Mr. Galloway could not feel so sure upon the point as he would have wished. His cousin was a needy

man—one who had made ducks and drakes of his own property, and was for ever appealing to Mr. Galloway for assistance. Mr. Galloway did not shut his eyes to the fact that if this *should* have been the case, Robert Galloway had had forty pounds from him instead of twenty—a great help to a man at his wits' end for money. He had forwarded a second £20 note, upon receiving information of the loss of the first.

What he most disliked, looking at it from this point of view, was, not the feeling that he had been cleverly deceived and laughed at, but that Arthur Channing should have suffered unjustly. If the lad *was* innocent, why, how cruel had been his own conduct towards him! But with these doubts came back the remembrance of Arthur's unsatisfactory behaviour with respect to the loss; his non-denial; his apparent guilt; his strange shrinking from investigation. Busy as Mr. Galloway was, that day, he could not confine his thoughts to his business; he would willingly have given another £20 note out of his pocket to know, beyond doubt, whether or not Arthur was guilty.

Arthur, meanwhile, had commenced his task. He took possession of the study, where he was secure from interruption, and applied himself diligently to it. How still the house seemed! How still it had seemed since the loss of Charles!

Even Annabel and Tom were wont to hush their voices; ever listening, as it were, for tidings to be brought of him. Save the two servants, Arthur was alone in it. Hamish was abroad, at his office; Constance and Annabel were at Lady Augusta's; Tom was in school; and Charles was not. Judith's voice would be heard now and then, wafted from the kitchen regions, in direction or reproof to Sarah; but there was no other sound. Arthur thought of the old days when the sun had shone; when he was free and upright in the sight of men; when Constance was happy in her future prospects of wedded life; when Tom looked forth certainly to the seniorship; when Charley's sweet voice and sweeter face might be seen and heard; when Hamish—oh, bitter thought, of all!—when Hamish had not fallen from his pedestal. It had all changed—changed to darkness and to gloom; and Arthur may be pardoned for feeling gloomy with it. But in the very midst of this gloom, there arose suddenly, without effort of his, certain words spoken by the consoling singer of Israel; and Arthur *knew* that he had but to trust to them:—

'For his wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in his pleasure is life; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER FOR MR. GALLOWAY.

Morning passed into afternoon, and afternoon was drawing towards its close. Roland Yorke had contrived to struggle through it, and be alive still, in spite of the amount of work which was pressed upon him. Mr. Galloway had put on his spectacles and copied out several pages himself—a thing he rarely attempted. But he had gone out now, and had carried with him some letters to post.

'Yes!' grumbled Roland. 'He can stretch *his* legs, but he takes good care I shall not stretch mine! Why couldn't he send me with those letters? It's my place to post them; it's not his. Write, write, write! till my fingers have got the cramp, and my feet have no more feeling in them than the stool has! Why, I wouldn't stop by myself in this horrid, musty, parchmented old place —Oh, it's you, is it?'

This was addressed to the postman, who came

in with the afternoon delivery of letters. Two: which he handed to Roland, and departed.

Of course Roland immediately began to scrutinize them: turning them over; critically guessing at the senders; playing with them at pitch and toss—anything to while away the time, and afford him some cessation from his own work. By these means he contrived to pass five minutes rather agreeably (estimating things by comparison), when Mr. Galloway's servant entered.

'Is my master in, Mr. Roland?'

'Of course he's not,' said Roland. 'He's gone gallavanting somewhere. He has all the pleasure of it, and I have all the work.'

'Will you please to give him this letter, then?' said the man. 'The post has just left it at our house, so I brought it round.'

'What's it brought round here for?' asked Roland.

'Because he ordered it done. He said he expected a letter would be delivered at the house by the afternoon post, and if it came I was to bring it to him at once. Good afternoon, sir.'

This little bit of information was quite enough for Roland. He seized the letter, as he had done the others, and subjected it to the like scrutiny. The address was written in a singular hand; in large, printing-looking letters. Roland satisfied his

curiosity, so far as the outside of the letter could do it, and then rose from his stool and laid the three letters upon Mr. Galloway's desk in his private room.

A short while, and that gentleman entered. 'Anything by the post?' was his first question.

'Two letters, sir,' replied Roland. 'And John brought round one, which was addressed to the house. He said you expected it.'

Mr. Galloway went into his private room. He glanced casually at the addresses on the letters, and then called Roland Yorke. 'Where is the letter John brought round?' he inquired, somewhat testily.

Roland pointed it out. 'That was it, sir.'

'That!' Mr. Galloway bent on it a keener glance, which probably satisfied him that it bore his private address. 'Was this the only one he brought?' added he; and from his manner and words Roland inferred that it was not the letter he had expected.

'That was all, sir.'

Roland returned to his own room, and Mr. Galloway sat down and opened his letters. The first two were short communications relative to business; the last was the one brought by John.

What did it contain? For one thing, it contained a bank-note for £20. But the contents?

Mr. Galloway gazed at it and rubbed his brow, and gazed again. He took off his spectacles, and put them on; he looked at the bank-note, and he read and re-read the letter: for it completely upset the theory and set at nought the data he had been going upon; especially the data of the last few hours.

'The finder of that lost £20 note sends it back to Mr. Galloway. His motive in doing so is that the wrongly suspected may be cleared. He who was publicly accused of the offence was innocent, as were all others upon whom suspicion (though not acted upon) may have fallen. The writer of this alone took the note, and now he restores it.'

Abrupt and signatureless, such was the letter. When Mr. Galloway had sufficiently overcome his surprise to reason rationally, it struck him as being a singular coincidence that this should come to him on the day when the old affair had been renewed again. Since its bustle had died out at the time of the occurrence, Mr. Galloway did not remember to have voluntarily spoken of it, until that morning with Roland Yorke.

He took up the bank-note. Was it the one actually taken—the same note—kept possibly, in fear, and now returned? He had no means of knowing. He thought it was not the same. His recollection of the lost note had seemed to be

that it was a dirty note, which must have passed through many hands; but he had never been quite clear upon that point. This note was clean and crisp.

Who *had* taken it? Who had sent it back? It entirely disposed of that disagreeable suspicion touching his cousin. Had his cousin so far forgotten himself as to take the note, he would not have been likely to return it: *he* knew nothing of the proceedings which had taken place in Helstonleigh, for Mr. Galloway had never mentioned them to him. The writer of this letter was cognizant of them, and had sent it that they might be removed.

At the first glance, it of course appeared to be a proof positive that Arthur Channing was not guilty. But Mr. Galloway was not accustomed to take only the superficial view of things: and it struck him, as it would strike others, that this might be, after all, a refined bit of finesse on Arthur's own part to remove the suspicion off himself. True, the cost of essaying it was twenty pounds: but what was that; compared, in value, to the restoration of his good name?

The letter bore the London post-mark. There was not a doubt that it had been there posted. That told nothing. Arthur, or anybody else, could get a letter posted there, if wishing to do

it: 'Where there's a will, there's a way,' thought Mr. Galloway. But again, where was Arthur Channing to get twenty pounds from? Mr. Galloway did not think that he could get this sum from anywhere, or that he possessed, himself, a twentieth part of it. So far, the probability was against Arthur's being the author. Mr. Galloway quite lost himself in conjectures. Why should it have been addressed to his residence, and not to the office? He had been expecting a letter from one, that afternoon, who always did address to his residence: and that letter, it appeared, had not come. However, that had nothing to do with this, Neither paper nor writing afforded any clue, and the latter was palpably disguised.

He called in Roland Yorke, for the purpose of putting to him a few useless questions—like a great many of us do when we are puzzled—questions, at any rate, that could throw no light upon the main subject.

'What did John say when he brought this letter?'

'Only what I told you, sir. That you expected a letter addressed to the house, and ordered him to bring it round.'

'But *this* is not the letter I expected,' tapping it with his finger, and looking altogether so puzzled and astonished that Roland stared in his turn.

'It's not my fault,' returned he. 'Shall I run round, sir, and ask John about it?'

'No,' testily answered Mr. Galloway. 'Don't be so fond of running round. This letter—— There's somebody come into the office,' he broke off.

Roland turned with alacrity, but very speedily appeared again, on his best behaviour, bowing as he showed in the Dean of Helstonleigh.

Mr. Galloway rose, and remained standing. The dean entered upon the business which had brought him there, a trifling matter connected with the affairs of the chapter. This over, Mr. Galloway took up the letter and showed it to him. The dean read it, and looked at the bank-note.

'I cannot quite decide in what light I ought to take it, sir,' remarked Mr. Galloway. 'It either refutes the suspicion of Arthur Channing's guilt, or else it confirms it.'

'In what way confirms it? I do not understand you,' said the dean.

'It may have come from himself, Mr. Dean. A wheel within a wheel.'

The dean paused to revolve the proposition, and then shook his head negatively. 'It appears to me to go a very great way towards proving his innocence,' he observed. 'The impression upon my own mind has been, that it was not he who took it—as you may have inferred, Mr. Galloway,

by my allowing him to retain his post in the cathedral.'

'But, sir, if he is innocent, who is guilty?' continued Mr. Galloway, in a tone of remonstrance.

'That is more than I can say,' replied the dean. 'But for the circumstances appearing to point so strongly to Arthur Channing, I never could have suspected him at all. A son of Mr. Channing's would have been altogether above suspicion, in my mind: and, as I tell you, for some time I have not believed him to be guilty.'

'If he is not guilty——' Mr. Galloway paused; the full force of what he was about to say pressing strongly upon his mind—'if he is not guilty, Mr. Dean, there has been a great deal of injustice done —not only to himself——'

'A great deal of injustice is committed every day, I fear,' quietly remarked the dean.

'Tom Channing will have lost the seniorship for nothing!' went on Mr. Galloway, in a perturbed voice, not so much addressing the dean, as giving vent to his thoughts aloud.

'Yes,' was the answer, spoken calmly, and imparting no token of what might be the dean's private sentiments upon the point. 'You will see to that matter,' the dean continued, referring to his own business there, as he rose from his chair.

'I will not forget it, Mr. Dean,' said Mr. Galloway. And he escorted the dean to the outer door, as was his custom when honoured by him with a visit, and bowed him out.

Roland just then looked a pattern of industry. He had resumed his seat, after rising in salutation as the dean passed through the office, and was writing away like a steam-engine. Mr. Galloway returned to his own room, and set himself calmly to consider all the bearings of this curious business. The great bar to his being able fully to regard Arthur as innocent, was the difficulty there existed of fixing upon anybody else as likely to have been guilty. Likely! he might almost have said as *possible* to have been guilty. 'I have a very great mind,' he growled to himself, 'to send for Butterby, and let him rake it all up again!' The uncertainty vexed him, and it seemed as if the affair was never to have an end. 'What if I show Arthur Channing the letter first, and study his countenance as he looks at it? I may gather something from that. I don't fancy he'd be an over good actor, as some might be; if he has sent this money, I shall see it in his face.'

Acting upon the moment's impulse, he suddenly opened the door of the outer office, and there found that Mr. Roland's industry had, for the present, come to an end. He was standing before

the window, making pantomimic signs through the glass to a friend of his, Knivett. His right thumb was pointed over his shoulder towards the door of Mr. Galloway's private room; no doubt, to indicate a warning that that gentleman was inside it, and that the office, consequently, was not free for promiscuous intruders. A few sharp words of reprimand to Mr. Roland ensued, and then he was sent off with a message to Arthur Channing.

It brought Arthur back with Roland. Mr. Galloway called Arthur into his own room, closed the door, and put the letter into his hand in silence.

He read it over twice before he could comprehend it; indeed, he did not do so fully then. His surprise appeared to be perfectly genuine, and so Mr. Galloway deemed it. 'Has this letter been sent to you, sir? Has any money been sent to you?'

'This has been sent to me,' replied Mr. Galloway, tossing to him the twenty-pound note. 'Is it the one that was taken, Channing?'

'How can I tell, sir?' said Arthur, in much simplicity. And Mr. Galloway's long doubts of him began to melt away.

'*You* did not send the money—to clear yourself?'

Arthur looked up in surprise. 'Where should

I get twenty pounds from?' he asked. 'I shall have a quarter's salary from Mr. Williams, shortly: but it is not quite due yet. And it will not be twenty pounds, or anything like that amount.'

Mr. Galloway nodded. It was the thought which had struck himself. Another thought, however, was now striking Arthur; a thought which caused his cheek to flush and his brow to lower. With the word 'salary' had arisen to him the remembrance of another's salary, due about this time: that of his brother Hamish. Had Hamish been making this use of it—to take the stigma from him? The idea received additional force from Mr. Galloway's next words: for they bore upon the point.

'This letter is what it purports to be: a missive from the actual thief; or else it comes from some well-wisher of yours, who sacrifices twenty pounds to do you a service. Which is it?'

Mr. Galloway fixed his eyes on Arthur's face and could not help noting the change which had come over it, over his bearing altogether. The open candour was gone: and in its place reigned the covert look, the hesitating manner, the confusion which had characterized him at the period of the loss. 'All I can say, sir, is, that I know nothing of this,' he presently said. 'It has surprised me as much as it can surprise any one.'

'Channing!' impulsively exclaimed Mr. Galloway, 'your manner and your words are in opposition, as they were at the time. The one gives the lie to the other. But I begin to believe you did not take it.'

'I did not,' returned Arthur.

'And therefore—as I don't like to be played with and made sport of, like a cat tormenting a mouse—I think I shall give orders to Butterby for a fresh investigation.'

It startled Arthur. The curiously significant tone of Mr. Galloway, his piercing gaze upon his face, also startled him. 'It would bring no satisfaction, sir,' he said. 'Pray do not. I would far rather continue to bear the blame.'

A pause. A new idea came glimmering into the mind of Mr. Galloway. 'Whom are you screening?' he asked. But he received no answer.

'Is it Roland Yorke?'

'Roland Yorke!' repeated Arthur, half reproachfully. 'No, indeed. I wish everybody had been as innocent of it as was Roland Yorke.'

In good truth, Mr. Galloway had only mentioned Roland's name as coming uppermost in his mind. He knew that there was no suspicion attaching to Roland. Arthur resumed, in agitation—

'Let the matter drop, sir. Indeed, it will be better. It appears, now, that you have the money

back again; and, 'for the rest, I am willing to take the blame, as I have done.'

'If I have the money back again, I have not other things back again,' crossly repeated Mr. Galloway. 'There's the loss of time it has occasioned, the worry, the uncertainty: who is to repay me all that?'

'My portion in it has been worse than yours, sir,' said Arthur, in a low, deep tone. 'Think of my loss of time; my worry and uncertainty; my loss of character; my anxiety of mind: they can never be repaid to me.'

'And whose the fault? If you were truly innocent, you might have cleared yourself with a word.'

Arthur knew he might. But that word he had not dared to speak. At this juncture, Roland Yorke appeared. 'Here's Jenner's old clerk come in, sir,' said he to his master. 'He wants to see yourself, he says.'

'He can come in,' replied Mr. Galloway. 'Are you getting on with that copying?' he added to Arthur, as the latter was going out.

'Yes, sir.'

The gentleman, whom Roland Yorke designated as 'Jenner's old clerk,' was shut in with Mr. Galloway; and Roland who appeared to be on the thorns of curiosity, arrested Arthur.

'I say, what is it that's agate? He has been going into fits pretty near, over some letter that came, asking me five hundred questions about it. What have you got to do with it? What does he want with you?'

'Somebody has been sending him the money back, Roland. It came in a letter.'

Roland opened his eyes. 'What money?'

'The money that was lost. A twenty-pound note has come. He asked me whether it was the veritable note that was taken.'

'A twenty-pound note come!' repeated puzzled Roland.

'It's true, Roland. It purports to be sent by the taker of the money for the purpose of clearing me.'

Roland stood for a few moments, profound surprise on his face, and then began to execute a hornpipe of triumph amid the desks and stools of the office. 'I said it would come right some time; over and over again I did! Give us your hand, old fellow! He's not such a bad trump after all, that thief!'

'Hush, Roland! you'll be heard. It may not do me much good. Galloway seems to doubt me still.'

'Doubt you still?' cried Roland, stopping short in his dance, and speaking in a very explosive

tone. 'Doubt you *still!* Why, what would he have?'

'I don't know,' sighed Arthur. 'I have assured him I did not send it, but he fancies I may have done it to whiten myself. He talks of calling in Butterby again.'

'My opinion then, is, that he wants to be transported, if he is to turn up such a heathen as that!' stamped Roland. 'What would he have, I ask? Another twenty, given him for interest? Arthur, dear old fellow, let's go off together to Port Natal, and leave him and his office to it! I'll find the means, if I rob his cash-box to get them!'

But Arthur was already beyond hearing, having waved his adieu to Roland Yorke and his impetuous but warm-hearted championship. Anxious to get on with the task he had undertaken, he hastened home. Constance was in the hall when he entered, having just returned from Lady Augusta Yorke's.

His confidant throughout, his gentle soother and supporter, his ever ready adviser, Arthur drew her into one of the rooms, and acquainted her with what had occurred. A look of terror rose to her face, as she listened.

'Hamish has done it!' she uttered, in a whisper. 'This puts all doubt at an end. There are times --there have been times'—she burst into tears as

she spoke—'when I have fondly tried to cheat myself that we were suspecting him wrongfully. Arthur! others suspect him.'

Arthur's face caught the same look that was upon hers. 'I trust not!'

'But they do. Ellen Huntley has dropped an inadvertent word, which convinces me he is in some way doubted there. She caught it up again in evident alarm, ere it was well spoken; and I dared not pursue the subject. It is Hamish who has sent this money.'

'You speak confidently, Constance.'

'Listen. I know that he has drawn money—papa's salary and his own: he mentioned it incidentally. A few days ago I asked him for money for housekeeping purposes, and he handed me a twenty-pound note, in mistake for a five-pound. He discovered the mistake before I did, and snatched it back again in some confusion. "I can't give you that," he said in a laughing manner, when he recovered himself. "That has a different destination." Arthur! that note, rely upon it, was going to Mr. Galloway.'

'When was this?' asked Arthur.

'Last week. Three or four days ago.'

Trifling as the incident was, it seemed to bear out their suspicions, and Arthur could only come to the same conclusion that his sister did: the

thought had already crossed him, you remember. 'Do not let it pain you thus, Constance,' he said, for her tears were falling fast. 'He may not call in Butterby. Your grieving will do no good.'

'I cannot help it,' she exclaimed, with a burst of anguish. 'How God is trying us!'

Ay! like as the silver, which must be seven times purified, ere it be sufficiently refined.

CHAPTER VII.

DARK CLOUDS.

CONSTANCE CHANNING sat, her forehead buried in her hands. *How God was trying them!* The sentence, wrung from her in the bitterness of her heart, but expressed the echo of surrounding things. Her own future blighted; Arthur's character gone; Tom lost the seniorship; Charley not heard of, dead or alive! There were moments, and this was one, when Constance felt almost beyond the pale of hope. The college school, meanwhile, existed in a state of constant suspense, the sword of terror ever hanging over its head. Punishment for the present was reserved; and what the precise punishment would be when it came, none could tell. Talkative Bywater was fond of saying that it did not matter whether Miss Charley turned up or not, so far as their backs were concerned: *they* would be made to tingle, either way.

Arthur, after communicating to Constance the strange fact of the return of the money to Mr.

Galloway, shut himself up in the study to pursue his copying. It was the tea-hour, and Sarah brought in the things. But neither Hamish nor Tom had come in; and Constance sat alone, deep in her unpleasant thoughts.

That it was Hamish who had now returned the money to Mr. Galloway, Constance could not entertain the slightest doubt. It had a very depressing effect upon her. It could not render worse what had previously happened: indeed, it rather mended it, insomuch as that it served to evince some repentance, some good feeling; but it made the suspicion against Hamish a certainty; and there had been times when Constance had been beguiled into thinking it only a suspicion. And now came this new fear of Mr. Butterby again.

Hamish's own footstep in the hall. Constance roused herself. He came in, books under his arm, as usual, and his ever gay face smiling. There were times when Constance nearly despised him or his perpetual sunshine. The seriousness which had overspread Hamish at the time of Charley's disappearance had nearly worn away. In his sanguine temperament, he argued that the not finding the corpse was a proof that Charley was alive yet, and would come forth in a mysterious manner one of these days.

'Have I kept you waiting tea, Constance?

began he. 'I came home by way of Close Street, and was called into Galloway's by Roland Yorke, and then got detained further by Mr. Galloway. Where's Arthur.'

'He has undertaken some copying for Mr. Galloway, and is busy with it,' replied Constance in a low tone. 'Hamish!' raising her eyes to his face, as she took resolution to speak of the affair, 'have you heard what has happened?'

'That some benignant fairy has forwarded a bank-note to Galloway on the wings of the telegraph? Roland Yorke would not allow me to remain in ignorance of that. Mr. Galloway did me the honour to ask whether I had sent it.'

'You!' uttered Constance, regarding the avowal only from her own point of view. 'He asked whether *you* had sent it?'

'He did.'

She gazed at Hamish as if she would read his very soul. 'And what did—what did you answer?'

'Told him I wished a few others would suspect me of the same, and count imaginary payments for real ones.'

'Hamish!' she exclaimed, the complaint wrung from her, 'how can you be so light, so cruel, when our hearts are breaking?'

Hamish, in turn, was surprised at this. 'I, cruel! In what manner, Constance? My dear,

I repeat to you that we shall have Charley back. I feel sure of it; and it has done away with my fear. Some inward conviction, or instinct—you may call it which you like—tells me that we shall; and I implicitly trust to it. We need not mourn for him.'

'It is not for Charley: I do not speak of Charley now,' she sadly reiterated. 'You are straying from the point. Hamish, have you *no* love left for Arthur?'

'I have plenty of love for everybody,' said Mr. Hamish.

'Then *how* can you behave like this? Arthur is not guilty; you know he is not. And look what he has to bear! I believe you would laugh at the greatest calamity! The sending back this money to Mr. Galloway has—has—sadly distressed me.'

Hamish turned his smiling eyes upon her, but his tone was grave. 'Wait until some great calamity occurs, Constance, and then see whether I laugh. Did I laugh that dreadful night and day that succeeded to the loss of Charley? The sending back the money to Mr. Galloway is not a cause for sadness. It most certainly exonerates Arthur.'

'And you are gay over it!' She would have given anything to speak more plainly.

'I am particularly gay this afternoon,' acknow-

ledged Hamish, who could not be put out of temper by any amount of reproach whatever. 'I have had great news by the post, Constance.'

'From Germany?' she quickly cried.

'Yes, from Germany,' he answered, taking a letter from his pocket, and spreading it open before Constance.

It contained the bravest news; great news, as Hamish expressed it. It was from Mr. Channing himself, and it told them that he was so far restored that there was no doubt now of his being able to resume his own place at his office. They intended to be home the first week in November. The weather at Borcette continued warm and charming, and they would prolong their stay there to the full time contemplated, and enjoy the benefit of it. It had been a fine autumn everywhere. There was a postscript added to the letter, as if an afterthought had occurred to Mr. Channing. 'When you see Mr. Huntley, tell him how well I am progressing. I remember, by the way, that he hinted at being able to introduce you to something, should I no longer require you in Guild Street.'

In the glad delight that the news brought, Constance lost sight partially of her sadness. 'It is not all gloom,' she whispered to herself. 'If we could but dwell on God's mercies as we do on his

chastisement; if we could but feel more trust, we should see the bright side of the cloud oftener than we do.'

But it *was* dark; dark in many ways, and Constance was soon to be reminded again of it forcibly. She had taken her seat at the tea-table, when Tom came in. He looked flushed—stern; and he flung his Gradus, and one or two othe books in a lump, on the side table, with more force than was necessary; and himself into a chair, ditto.

'Constance, I shall leave the school!'

Constance, in her dismay, dropped the sugar-tongs amidst the sugar. 'What, Tom?'

'I shall leave the school,' he repeated, his tone as fiery as his face. 'I'd not stop in it another month, if I were bribed with gold. Things are getting too bad there.'

'Oh, Tom, Tom! Is this your endurance?'

'Endurance!' he exclaimed. 'That's a nice word in theory, Constance; but just you try it in practice! Who has endured, if I have not? I thought I'd go on and endure it, as you say; at any rate, until papa came home. But I can't—I can't!'

'What has happened more than usual?' inquired Hamish.

'It gets worse and worse,' said Tom, turning

his blazing face upon his brother. 'I'd not wish a dog to live the life that I live in the college school. They call me a felon, and treat me as one; they send me to Coventry; they won't acknowledge me as one of their seniors. My position is unbearable.'

'Live it down, Tom,' said Hamish quietly.

'Haven't I been trying to live it down?' returned the boy, suppressing his emotion. 'It has lasted now these two months, and I have borne it daily. At the time of Charley's loss, I was treated better for a day or two, but that has worn away. It is of no use your looking at me reproachfully, Constance; I *must* complain. What other boy in the world has ever been put down as I? I was the head of the school, next to Gaunt; looking forward to be the head; and what am I now? The seniorship taken from me in shame; Huntley exalted to my place; my chance of the exhibition gone——'

'Huntley does not take the exhibition,' interrupted Constance.

'But Yorke will. *I* shan't be allowed to get it. Now I know it, Constance, and the school knows it. Let a fellow once go down, and he's kept down: every dog has a fling at him. The seniorship's gone, the exhibition is going. I might bear that tamely, you might say; and of course I

might, for they are negative evils: but what I can't and won't bear, are the insults of every-day life. Only this afternoon they——'

Tom stopped, for his feelings were choking him; and the complaint he was about to relate was never spoken. Before he had gathered breath and calmness, Arthur entered and took his seat at the tea-table. Poor Tom, allowing one of his unfortunate explosions of temper to get the better of him, sprung from his chair and burst forth with a passionate reproach to Arthur, whom he regarded as the author of all the ill.

'Why did you do it? Why did you bring this disgrace upon us? But for you, I should not have lost caste in the school.'

'Tom!' interposed Hamish, in a severe tone.

Mr. Tom, brave college boy that he was—manly as he coveted to be deemed—actually burst into tears. Tears called forth, not by contrition, I fear; but by remembered humiliation, by vexation, by the moment's passion. Never had Tom cast a reproach openly to Arthur; whatever he may have felt, he buried it within himself: but that his opinion vacillated upon the point of Arthur's guilt, was certain. Constance went up to him, and laid her hand gently and soothingly upon his shoulder.

'Tom, dear boy, your troubles are making you

forget yourself. Do not be unjust to Arthur. He is innocent as you.'

'Then if he is innocent, why does he not speak out like a man, and proclaim his innocence?' retorted Tom, sensibly enough, but with rather too much heat. 'That's what the school cast in my teeth more than anything again. "Don't preach up your brother's innocence to us!" they cry; "if he did not take it, wouldn't he say so?" Look at Arthur now'—and Tom pointed his finger at him—'he does not, even here, to me, assert that he is innocent!'

Arthur's face burnt under the reproach. He turned it upon Hamish, with a gesture almost as fiery, quite as hasty, as any that had been vouchsafed them by Tom. Plainly as look could speak, it said, 'Will *you* suffer this injustice to be heaped upon me?' Constance saw the look, and she quitted Tom with a faint cry, and bent over Arthur, afraid of what truth he might give utterance to.

'Patience yet, Arthur!' she whispered. 'Do not let a moment's anger undo the work of weeks. Remember how bravely you have borne.'

'Ay! Heaven forgive my pride! Tom,' Arthur added, turning to him calmly, 'I would clear you—or rather clear myself—in the eyes of the school if I could: but it is impossible. However,

you have less to blame me for than you may deem.'

Hamish advanced. He caught the arm of Tom and drew him to a distant window. 'Now, lad,' he said, 'let me hear all about this bugbear. I'll see if it can be in any way lightened for you.'

Hamish's tone was kindly, his manner frank and persuasive, and Tom was won over to speak of his troubles. Hamish listened with an attentive ear. 'Will you abide by my advice?' he asked him, when the catalogue of grievances had come to an end.

'Perhaps I will,' replied Tom, who was growing cool after his heat.

'Then, as I said to you before, so I say now, *Live it down.* It is the best advice I can give you.'

'Hamish, you don't know what it is!'

'Yes, I do. I can enter into your trials and annoyances as keenly as if I had to encounter them. I do not affect to disparage them to you: I know that they are real trials, real insults; but if you will only make up your mind to bear them, they will lose half their sharpness. Your interest lies in remaining in the college school: more than that, your duty lies in it. Tom, don't let it be said that a Channing shrunk from his duty because it brought him difficulties.'

'I don't think I *can* stop in it, Hamish. I'd rather stand in a pillory and have rotten eggs splashed at me.'

'Yes, you can. In fact, my boy, for the present you *must*. Disobedience has never been a fault among us, and I am sure you will not be the one to inaugurate it. Your father left me in charge, in his place, with full control; and I cannot sanction any such measure as that of your quitting the school. In less than a month's time he will be home, and you can then submit the case to him, and abide by his advice.'

With all Tom's faults, he was not rebellious, neither was he unreasonable; and he made up his mind, not without some grumbling, to do as Hamish desired him. He drew his chair with a jerk to the tea-table, which of course there was no necessity for. I told you that the young Channings, admirably as they had been brought up, had their faults; like you have yours, and I have mine.

It was a silent meal. Annabel, who was wont to keep them alive, whatever might be their troubles, had remained to take tea at Lady Augusta Yorke's, with Caroline and Fanny. Had Constance known that she was in the habit of thoughtlessly chattering upon any subject that came uppermost, including poor Charles's propensity

to be afraid of ghosts, she had allowed her to remain with them more charily. Hamish took a book and read, eating his bread and butter absently. Arthur only made a show of taking anything, and soon left them, to resume his employment; Tom did not even make a show of it, but unequivocally rejected all good things. 'How could he be hungry?' he asked, when Constance pressed him. An unsocial meal it was—as unpleasant nearly as were their inward thoughts. They felt for Tom, in the midst of their graver griefs; but they were all at cross purposes together, and they knew it; therefore they could only retain an uncomfortable reticence one with another. Tom laid the blame to the share of Arthur; Arthur and Constance to the share of Hamish. To whom Hamish laid it, was only known to himself.

He, Hamish, rose as the tea-things were carried away. He was preparing for a visit to Mr. Huntley's. His visits there, as already remarked, had not been frequent of late. He had discovered that he was not welcome to Mr. Huntley. And Hamish Channing was not one to thrust his company upon any one: even the attraction of Ellen could not induce that. But it is very probable that he was glad of the excuse Mr. Channing's letter afforded him to go thither now.

He found Miss Huntley alone; a tall, stiff lady,

who always looked as if she were cased in whalebone. She generally regarded Hamish with some favour, which was saying a great deal for Miss Huntley.

'You are quite a stranger here,' she remarked to him as he entered.

'I think I am,' replied Hamish. 'Mr. Huntley is still in the dining-room, I hear?'

'Mr. Huntley is,' said the lady, speaking as if the fact did not give her pleasure, though Hamish could not conceive for why. 'My niece has chosen to remain with him,' she added, in a tone which denoted dissatisfaction. 'I am quite *tired* of talking to her! I tell her this is proper, and the other is improper, and she goes and mixes up my advice together in the most extraordinary way; leaving alone what she ought to do, and doing what I tell her she ought not! Only this very morning I read her a sermon upon "Propriety, and the fitness of things." It took me just an hour—an hour by my watch, I assure you, Mr. Hamish Channing!—and what is the result? I retired from the dinner-table precisely ten minutes after the removal of the cloth, according to my invariable custom; and Ellen, in defiance of my warning her that it is not lady-like, stays there behind me! "I have not eaten my grapes yet, aunt," she says to me. And there she stays, just

to talk with her father. And he encourages her! What will become of Ellen, I cannot imagine; she will never be a lady!'

'It's very sad!' replied Hamish, coughing down a laugh, and putting on the gravest face he could call up.

'Sad!' repeated Miss Huntley, who sat perfectly upright, her hands, cased in mittens, crossed upon her lap. 'It is *grievous*, Mr. Hamish Channing! She—what do you think she did only yesterday? One of our maids was going to be married, and a dispute, or some unpleasantness, occurred between her and the intended husband. Would you believe that Ellen actually wrote a letter for the girl (a poor ignorant thing, who never learnt to read, let alone to write, but an excellent servant) to this man, that things might be smoothed between them? My niece, Miss Ellen Huntley, lowering herself to write a—a—I can scarcely allow my tongue to utter the word, Mr. Hamish—a love-letter!'

Miss Huntley lifted her eyes, and her mittens. Hamish expressed himself inexpressibly shocked, inwardly wishing he could get Miss Ellen Huntley to write a few to him.

'And I get no sympathy from any one!' pursued Miss Huntley. 'None! I spoke to my brother, and he could not see that she had done

anything wrong in writing: or pretended that he could not. Oh, dear! how things are altered from what they were when I was a young girl! Then——'

'My master says, will you please to walk into the dining-room, sir?' interrupted a servant at this juncture. And Hamish rose and followed him.

Mr. Huntley was alone. Hamish threw his glance to the various parts of the room, but Ellen was not in it. The meeting was not very cordial on Mr. Huntley's side. 'What can I do for you?' he inquired, as he shook hands. Which was sufficient to imply coldly, 'You must have come to my house for some particular purpose. What is it?'

But Hamish could not lose his sunny temperament, his winning manner. 'I bring you great news, Mr. Huntley. We have heard from Borcette: and the improvement in my father's health is so great, that all doubts as to the result are over.'

'I said it would be so,' replied Mr. Huntley.

Some little time they continued talking, and then Hamish mentioned the matter alluded to in the postscript of the letter. 'Is it correct that you will be able to help me to something,' he inquired, 'when my father shall resume his own place in Guild Street?'

'It is correct that I told your father so, answered Mr. Huntley. 'I thought then that I could.'

'And is the situation gone? I assume that it was a situation.'

'It is not gone. The post will not be vacant until the beginning of the year. Have you heard that there is to be a change in the joint-stock bank?'

'No,' replied Hamish, looking up with much interest.

'Mr. Bartlett leaves. He is getting in years, his health is failing him, and he wishes to retire. As one of the largest shareholders in the bank, I shall possess the largest voice in the appointment of a successor, and I had thought of you. Indeed, I have no objection to say that there is not the slightest doubt you would have been appointed; otherwise, I should not have spoken confidently to Mr. Channing.'

It was an excellent post; there was no doubt of that. The bank was not an extensive one; it was not the principal bank of Helstonleigh; but it was a firmly established, thoroughly respectable concern; and Mr. Bartlett, who had been its manager for many years, enjoyed desirable privileges, and a handsome salary. A far larger salary than was Mr. Channing's. The dwelling-house, a

good one, attached to the bank, was used as his residence, and would be, when he left, the residence of his successor.

'I should like it of all things!' cried Hamish.

'So would many a one, young sir, who is in a better position than you,' drily answered Mr. Huntley. 'I thought you might have filled it.'

'Can I not, sir?'

'No.'

Hamish did not expect the answer. He looked inquiringly at Mr. Huntley. 'Why can I not?'

'Because I cannot now recommend you to it,' was the reply.

'But why not?' exclaimed Hamish.

'When I spoke of you as becoming Mr. Bartlett's successor, I believed you would be found worthy to fulfil his duties.'

'I can fulfil them,' said Hamish.

'Possibly. But so much doubt has arisen upon that point in my own mind, that I can no longer recommend you for it. In fact, I could not sanction your appointment.'

'What have I done?' inquired Hamish.

'Ask your conscience. If that does not tell you plainly enough, I shall not.'

'My conscience accuses me of nothing that need render me unfit to fill the post, and to perform my duties in it, Mr. Huntley.'

'I think otherwise. But, to pursue the subject will be productive of no benefit, so we will let it drop. I would have secured you the appointment, could I have done so conscientiously, but I cannot; and the matter is at an end.'

'At least you can tell me why you will not?' said Hamish, speaking with some sarcasm, in the midst of his respect.

'I have already declined. Ask your own conscience, Hamish.'

'The worst criminal has a right to know his accusation, Mr. Huntley. Otherwise, he cannot defend himself.'

'It will be time enough for you to defend yourself when you are publicly accused. I shall say no more upon the point. I am sorry your father mentioned the thing to you, necessitating this explanation, so far; I have also been sorry for having ever mentioned it to him. My worst explanation will be with your father, for I cannot enter into cause and effect, any more than I can to you.'

'I have for some little time been conscious of a change in your mind towards me, Mr. Huntley.'

'Ay—no doubt.'

'Sir, you *ought* to tell me what has caused it. I might explain away any prejudice or wrong impression——'

'There, that will do,' interrupted Mr. Huntley. 'It is neither prejudice nor wrong impression that I have taken up. And now I have said the last word upon the matter that I shall say.'

'But, sir——'

'No more, I say!' peremptorily interrupted Mr. Huntley. 'The subject is over. Let us talk of other things. I need not ask whether you have news of poor Charley; you would have informed me of that at once. You see, I was right in advising silence to be kept towards them. All this time of suspense would have told badly on Mr. Channing.'

Hamish rose to leave. He had done little good, it appeared, by his visit; certainly, he could not wish to prolong it. 'There was an unsealed scrap of paper slipped inside my father's letter,' he said. 'It was from my mother to Charley. This is it.'

It appeared to have been written hastily—perhaps from a sudden thought at the moment of Mr. Channing's closing his letter. Mr. Huntley took it in his hand.

'My dear little Charley.—How is it you do not write to mamma? Not a message from you now: not a letter! I am sure you are not forgetting me.'

'Poor boy!' exclaimed Mr. Huntley, handing it back to Hamish. 'Poor mother!'

'I did not show it to Constance,' observed Hamish. 'It would only distress her. Good night, sir. By the way,' added Hamish, turning as he reached the door, 'Mr. Galloway has got that money back again.'

'What money?' cried Mr. Huntley.

'That which was lost. A twenty-pound note came to him in a letter by this afternoon's post. The letter states that Arthur, and all others who may have been accused, are innocent.'

'Oh, indeed!' cried Mr. Huntley, with cutting sarcasm, as the conviction flashed over him that Hamish, and no other, had been the sender. 'The thief has come to his senses at last, has he? So far as to render lame justice to Arthur.'

Hamish left the room. The hall had not yet been lighted, and Hamish could hardly see the outline of a form crossing it from the staircase to the drawing-room. *He* knew whose it was, and he caught hold of it.

'Ellen,' he whispered, 'what has turned your father against me.'

Of course she could not enlighten him; she could not say to Hamish Channing, 'He suspects you of being a thief.' Her whole spirit would have revolted from that, as much as it did from the accusation. The subject was a painful one; she was flurried at the sudden meeting—the

stealthy meeting, it may be said; and—she burst into tears.

I am quite afraid to say what Mr. Hamish did, this being a sober story. When he left the hall, Ellen Huntley's cheeks were glowing, and certain sweet words were ringing changes on her ears.

'Ellen! they shall never take you from me!'

CHAPTER VIII.

MUFFINS FOR TEA!

A WEEK or two passed by, and November was rapidly approaching. Things remained precisely as they were at the close of the last chapter: nothing fresh had occurred; no change had taken place. Tom Channing's remark, though much cannot be said for its elegance, was indisputable in point of truth—that when a fellow was down, he was kept down, and every dog had a fling at him. It was being exemplified in the case of Arthur. The money, so mysteriously conveyed to Mr. Galloway, had proved of little service towards clearing him; in fact, it had the contrary effect; and people openly expressed their opinion that it had come from himself or his friends. He was *down;* and it would take more than that to lift him up again. Mr. Galloway kept his thoughts to himself, or had put them into his cash-box with the note, for he said nothing. Roland Yorke did not imitate his example; he was nearly as explosive over the present matter as he had been over the

loss. It would have pleased him that Arthur should be announced innocent by public proclamation. Roland was in a most explosive frame of mind on another score, and that was the confinement to the office. In reality, he was not overworked; for Arthur managed to get through a good amount of it at his home, which he took in regularly, morning after morning, to Mr. Galloway. Roland, however, thought he was, and his dissatisfaction was becoming unbearable. I do not think that Roland *could* have done a hard day's work. To sit steadily to it for only a couple of hours appeared to be an absolute impossibility to his restless temperament. He must look off; he must talk; he must yawn; he must tilt his stool; he must take a slight interlude at balancing the ruler on his nose, or at other similar recreative and intellectual amusements; but, apply himself in earnest, he could not. Therefore there was little fear of Mr. Roland's being overcome with the amount of work. But what told upon Roland was the confinement—I don't mean upon his health, you know, but his temper. It had happened many a day since Jenkins's absence, that Roland had never stirred from the office, except to get his dinner. He must be there in good time in the morning—at the frightfully early hour of nine—and he often did not get released till six. When

he went to his dinner at one, Mr. Galloway would say, 'You must be back in half an hour, Yorke; I may have to go out.' Once or twice he had not gone to his dinner till two or three o'clock, and then he was half-dead with hunger. All this chafed poor Roland nearly beyond endurance: had he been a bottle of soda-water, he would have gone off with a burst.

Another cause was rendering Roland's life not the most peaceful one. He was beginning to be seriously dunned for money. Careless in that, as he was in other things, improvident as was ever Lady Augusta, Roland rarely paid till he was compelled. A very good hand was he at contracting debts, but a bad one at liquidating them. Roland did not intend to be dishonest. Were all his creditors standing around him, and a roll of bank-notes before him, he would freely have paid the lot; very probably, in his open-heartedness, have made each creditor a present, over and above, for 'his trouble.' But, failing the roll of notes, he only staved off the difficulties in the best way he could, and grew cross and ill-tempered on being applied to. His chief failing was his impulsive thoughtlessness. Often, when he had teased or worried Lady Augusta out of money, to satisfy a debt for which he was being pressed, that very money would be expended in some passing folly,

arising with the impulse of the moment, before it had had time to reach the creditor. There are too many like Roland Yorke.

Roland was late in the office one Monday evening, he and a lamp sharing it between them. He was in a terrible temper, and sat kicking his feet on the floor, as if the noise, for it might be heard in the street, would while away the time. He had nothing to do; the writing he had been about was positively finished; but he had to stop in, waiting for Mr. Galloway, who had gone out, but had not left the office for the evening. He would have given the whole world to take the pipe out of his pocket and begin to smoke; but that pastime was so firmly forbidden in the office, that even Roland dared not disobey.

'There goes six of 'em!' he uttered, as the near cathedral clock rang out the hour, and his boots threatened to stave in the floor. 'If I stand this life much longer, I'll be shot! It's enough to take the spirit out of a fellow; to wear his flesh off his bones; to afflict him with nervous fever. What an idiot I was to let my lady mother put me here! Better have stuck to those musty old lessons at school, and gone in for a parson! Why can't Jenkins get well, and come back? He's shirking it, that's my belief. And why can't Galloway get Arthur back? He might, if he pressed

it! Talk of solitary confinement driving prisoners mad at their precious model prisons, what else is this? I wish I could go mad for a week, if old Galloway might be punished for it! It's worse than any prison, this office! At four o'clock he went out, and now it's six, and I have not had a blessed soul put his nose inside the door to say, "How are ye getting on?" I'm a regular prisoner, and nothing else. Why doesn't he put shackles on my legs? Why doesn't he——'

The complaint was cut short by the entrance of Mr. Galloway. Unconscious of the rebellious feelings of his clerk, he passed through the office to his own room, Roland's rat-tat-to having ceased at his appearance. To find Roland drumming on the floor with his feet, was nothing unusual—rather moderate for him; Mr. Galloway *had* found him doing it with his head. Two or three minutes elapsed, and Mr. Galloway came out again.

'You can shut up, Roland. And then, take these letters to the post. Put the desks straight first; what a mess you get them in! Is that will engrossed?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well. Be here in time in the morning. Good night.'

'Good night, sir,' responded Roland. 'Yes! it's all very fine,' he went on, as he opened the desks,

and shoved everything in with his two hands, indiscriminately, *en masse*, which was *his* way of putting things straight. '"Be here in time!" Of course! No matter what time I am let off the previous evening. If I stand this long——'

Roland finished his sentence by an emphatic turn of the key of the office-door, which expressed quite as much as words could have done; for he was already out of the room, his hat on his head, and the letters in his hand. Calling out lustily for the housekeeper, he flung the key to her, and bounded off in the direction of the post-office.

His way lay past Mrs. Jenkins's shop, which the maid had, for the hour, been left to attend to. She was doing it from a leaf taken out of Roland's own book—standing outside the door, and gazing all ways. It suddenly struck Roland that he could not do better than pay Jenkins a visit, just to ascertain how long he meant to absent himself. In he darted, with his usual scant hesitation, and went on to the parlour. There was no hurry for the letters; the post did not close till nine.

The little parlour, dark by day, looked very comfortable now. A bright fire, a bright lamp, and a well-spread tea-table, at which Mrs. Jenkins sat. More comfortable than Jenkins himself did, who lay back in his easy chair, white and wan, meekly enjoying a lecture from his wife. He

started from it at the appearance of Roland, bowing in his usual humble fashion, and smiling a glad smile of welcome.

'I say, Jenkins, I have come to know how long you mean to leave us to ourselves?' was Roland's greeting. 'It's too bad, you know. How d'ye do, Mrs. Jenkins? Don't you look snug here? It's a nasty cutting night, and I have got to tramp all the way to the post-office.'

Free and easy Roland drew a chair forward on the opposite side of the hearth to Jenkins, Mrs. Jenkins and her good things being in the middle, and warmed his hands over the blaze. 'Ugh!' he shivered, 'I can't bear these keen, easterly winds. It's fine to be you, Jenkins! basking by a blazing fire, and junketing upon plates of buttered muffins!'

'Would you please to condescend to take a cup of tea with us, sir?' was Jenkins's answer. 'It is just ready.'

'I don't care if I do,' said Roland. 'There's nothing I like better than buttered muffins. We get them sometimes at home; but there's so many to eat at our house that before a plate is well in, a dozen hands are snatching at it, and it's emptied. Lady Augusta knows no more of comfort than a cow, and *will* have the whole tribe of young ones in to meals.'

'You'll find these muffins different from what you get at home,' said Mrs. Jenkins, in her curt snappish, but really not inhospitable way, as she handed the muffins to Roland. 'I know what it is when things are left to servants, as they are at your place; they turn out uneatable—soddened things, with rancid butter put on 'em, nine times out of ten, instead of good, wholesome fresh. Servants' cooking won't do for Jenkins now, and it never did for me.'

'These are good, though!' exclaimed Roland, eating away with intense satisfaction. 'Have you got any more down-stairs? Mrs. Jenkins, don't I wish you could always toast muffins for me! Is that some ham?'

His eyes had caught a small dish of ham, in delicate slices, put there to tempt poor Jenkins. But he was growing beyond such tempting now, for his appetite wholly failed him. It was upon this point he had been undergoing Mrs. Jenkins's displeasure when Roland interrupted them. The question led to an excellent opportunity for the renewing of the grievance, and she was too persistent a diplomatist to let it slip. Catching hold of the dish, and leaving her chair, she held it out underneath the eyes of Roland.

'Young Mr. Yorke, do you see anything the matter with that ham? Please to tell me.'

'I see that it looks uncommon good,' replied Roland.

'Do you hear?' sharply ejaculated Mrs. Jenkins, turning short round upon her husband.

'My dear, I never said a word but what it was good; I never had any other thought,' returned he with deprecation. 'I only said that I could not eat it. I can't—indeed, I can't! My appetite is gone.'

Mrs. Jenkins put the dish down upon the table with a jerk. 'That's how he goes on!' said she to Ronald. 'It's enough to wear a woman's patience out! I get him muffins, I get him ham, I get him fowls, I get him fish, I get him puddings, I get him every conceivable nicety that I can think of, and not a thing will he touch. All the satisfaction I can get from him is, that "his stomach turns against food!"'

'I wish I could eat,' interposed Jenkins, mildly. 'I have tried to do it till I can try no longer. I wish I could.'

'Will you take some of this ham, young Mr. Yorke?' she asked. '*He* won't. He wants to know what scarcity of food is!'

'I'll take it all if you like,' said Roland, 'if it's going begging.'

Mrs. Jenkins accommodated him with a plate and knife and fork, and with some more muffins.

Roland did ample justice to the whole, despatching it down with about six cups of good tea, well sugared and creamed. Jenkins looked on with satisfaction, and Mrs. Jenkins appeared to regard it in the light of a personal compliment to herself, as acting chief of the commissariat department.

'And now,' said Roland, turning back to the fire, 'when are you coming out again, Jenkins?'

Jenkins coughed—more in hesitation for an answer, than of necessity. 'I am beginning to think, sir, that I shall not get out again at all,' he presently said.

'Halloa! I say, Jenkins, don't go and talk that rubbish!' was Roland's reply. 'You know what I told you once, about that dropsy. I heard of a man that took it into his head to fancy himself dead. And he ordered a coffin, and lay down in it, and stopped in it for six days, only getting up at night to steal the bread and cheese! His folks couldn't think, at first, where the loaves went to. You'll be fancying the same, if you don't mind!'

'If I could only get a little stronger, sir, instead of weaker, I should soon be at my duty again. I am anxious enough, sir, as you may imagine, for there's my salary, sir, coming to me as usual, and I doing nothing for it.'

'It's just this, Jenkins, that if you don't come back speedily, I shall take French leave, and be

off some fine morning. I can't stand it much longer. I can't tell you how many blessed hours at a stretch am I in that office with nobody to speak to. I *wish* I was at Port Natal!'

'Sir,' said Jenkins, thinking he would say a word of warning, in his kindly spirit, 'I have heard that there's nothing more deceptive to the mind than those foreign parts that people flock to when the rage arises for them. Many a man only goes out to starve and die.'

'Many a muff, you mean!' returned self-complaisant Roland. 'I say, Jenkins, isn't it a shame about Arthur Channing? Galloway has got his money back from the very thief himself, as the letter said, and yet the old grumbler won't speak out like a man, and say, "Shake hands, old fellow," and "I know you are innocent, and come back to the office again." Arthur would return, if he said that. See if I don't start for Port Natal!'

'I wish Mr. Arthur was back again, sir. It would make me easier.'

'He sits, and stews, and frets, and worries his brains about that office, and how it gets on without him!' tartly interposed Mrs. Jenkins. 'A sick man can't expect to grow better, if he is to pine himself into fiddlestrings!'

'I wish,' repeated poor Jenkins, in a dreamy sort of mood, his eyes fixed on the fire, and his

thin hands clasped upon his knees, 'I do wish Mr. Arthur was back. In a little while he'd quite replace me, and I should not be missed.'

'Hear him!' uttered Mrs. Jenkins. 'That's how he goes on!'

'Well,' concluded Roland, rising, and gathering up his letters, which he had deposited upon a side table, 'if this is not a nice part of the world to live in, I don't know what is! Arthur Channing kept down under Galloway's shameful injustice; Jenkins making out that things are all over with him; and I driven off my head doing everybody's work! Good night, Jenkins. Good night, Mrs. J. That was a stunning tea! I'll come in again some night, when you have got toasted muffins!'

CHAPTER IX.

A CHATEAU EN ESPAGNE.

A KEEN wind, blowing from the east, was booming through the streets of Helstonleigh, striking pitilessly the eyes and cheeks of the wayfarers, cutting thin forms nearly in two, and taking stout ones off their legs.

Blinded by the sharp dust, giving hard words to the wind, to the cold, to the post-office for not being nearer, to anything and everything, Roland Yorke dashed along, suffering nothing and nobody to impede his progress. He flung the letters into the box at the post-office, when he reached that establishment, and then set off at the same pace back again.

Roland was in a state of inward commotion. He thought himself the most injured, the most hard-worked, the most-to-be-pitied fellow under the sun. The confinement in the office, with the additional work he had to get through there was the chief grievance; and a grievance it really was

to one of Roland's temperament. When he had Arthur Channing and Jenkins for his companions in it, to whom he could talk as he pleased, and who did all the work, allowing Roland to do all the play, it had been tolerably bearable; but that state of things was changed, and Roland was feeling that he could bear it no longer.

Another thing that Roland would perhaps be allowed to bear no longer was—immunity from his debts. *They* had grown on him latterly, as much as the work had. Careless Roland saw no way out of that difficulty, any more than he did out of the other, save by an emigration to that desired haven which had stereotyped itself on the retina of his imagination in colours of the brightest fantasy—Port Natal. For its own sake, Roland was hurrying to get to it, as well as that it might be convenient to do so.

'Look here,' said he to himself, as he tore along, 'even if Carrick were to set me all clear and straight—and I daresay he might, if I told him the bother I am in—where would be the good? It would not forward me. I'd not stop at Galloway's another month to be made into a duke royal. If he'd take back Arthur with honours, and Jenkins came out of his cough and his shadowiness and returned, I don't know but I might do my inclination violence, and remain. I

can't, as it is. I should go dead with the worry and the work.'

Roland paused, fighting for an instant with a gust of wind and grit. Then he resumed—

'I'd pay the debts if I could; but, if I can't, what am I to do but leave them unpaid? Much better get the money from Carrick to start me off to Port Natal, and set me going there. Then, when I have made enough, I'll send the cash to Arthur, and get him to settle up for me. I don't want to cheat the poor wretches out of their money; I'd rather pay 'em double than do that. Some of them work hard enough to get it: almost as hard as I do at Galloway's; and they have a right to their own. In three months' time after landing, I shall be able to do the thing liberally. I'll make up my mind from to-night, and go: I know it will be all for the best. Besides, there's the other thing.'

What the 'other thing' might mean, Mr. Roland did not more explicitly state. He came to another pause, and then went on again.

'That's settled. I'll tell my lady to-night, and I'll tell Galloway in the morning; and I'll fix on the time for starting, and be off to London, and see what I can do with Carrick. Let's see! I shall want to take out lots of things. I can get them in London. When Bagshaw went, he told

me of about a thousand. I think I dotted them down somewhere: I must look. Rum odds and ends they were: I know frying-pans were amongst them. Carrick will go with me to buy them, if I ask him; and then he'll pay, if it's only out of politeness. Nobody sticks out for politeness more than Carrick. He—'

Roland's castles in the air were suddenly cut short. He was passing a dark part near the Cathedral, when a rough hand—rough in texture, not in motion—was laid upon his shoulder, and a peculiar piece of paper thrust upon him. The assailant was Hopper, the sheriff's officer.

Roland flew into one of his passions. He divined what it was, perfectly well: nothing less than one of those little mandates from our Sovereign Lady the Queen, which, a short while back had perilled Hamish Channing. He repaid Hopper with a specimen of his tongue, and flung the writ back at him.

'Now, sir, where's the good of your abusing me, as if it was my fault?' returned the man, in a tone of reasoning remonstrance. 'I have had it in my pocket this three weeks, Mr. Yorke, and not a day but I could have served it on you: but I'm loth to trouble young gentlemen such as you, as I'm sure many of you in this town could say. I have got into displeasure with our folk about the delay

in this very paper, and—in short, sir, I have not done it till I was obliged.'

'You old preacher!' foamed Roland. 'I have not tipped you with half-a-crown lately, and therefore you can see me!'

'Mr. Yorke,' said the man earnestly, 'if you had filled my hands with half-crowns yesterday, I must have done this to-day. I tell you, sir, I have got into a row with our people over it; and it's the truth. Why don't you, sir—if I may presume to give advice—tell out your little embarrassments to your mother, the Lady Augusta? She'd be sure to see you through them.'

'How dare you mention the Lady Augusta to me?' thundered haughty Roland. 'Is it fitting that the Lady Augusta's name should be bandied in such transactions as these? Do you think I don't know what's due to her, better than that? If I have got into embarrassment, I shall not drag my mother into it.'

'Well, sir, you know best. I did not mean to offend you, but the contrary. Mind, Mr. Roland Yorke!' added Hopper, pointing to the writ, which still lay where it had been flung, 'you can leave it there if you choose, sir, but I have served it upon you.'

Hopper went his way. Roland caught up the paper, tore it to pieces with his strong hand, and

tossed them after the man. The wind took up the quarrel, and scattered the pieces indiscriminately to the four compasses. Roland strode on.

'What a mercy that there's a Port Natal to be off to!' was his comment.

Things were not particularly promising at home, when Roland entered, looking at them in a quiet, sociable point of view. Lady Augusta was spending the evening at the deanery, and the children, from Gerald downwards, were turning the general parlour into a bear-garden. Romping, quarrelling, shouting and screaming, they were really as unrestrained as so many young bears. It would often be no better when Lady Augusta was at home. How Gerald and Tod contrived to do their lessons amidst it, was a marvel to everybody. Roland administered a few cuffs, to enjoin silence, and then went out again, he did not much care where. His feet took him to the house of his friend, Knivett, with whom he spent a pleasant evening, the topics of conversation turning chiefly upon the glories of Port Natal, and Roland's recent adventure with Hopper. Had anything been wanted to put the finishing touch to Roland's resolution, that little adventure would have supplied it.

It was past ten when he returned home. The

noisy throng had dispersed then, all save Gerald. Gerald had just accomplished his tasks, aud was now gracefully enjoying a little repose before the fire; his head on the back of my lady's low embroidered chair, and his feet extended on either hob.

'What's for supper?' asked Roland, turning his eyes on the cloth, which bore traces that a party, and not a scrupulously tidy one, had already partaken of that meal.

'Bones,' said Gerald.

'Bones?' echoed Roland.

'Bones,' rejoined Gerald. 'They made a show of broiling some, down-stairs, but they took good care to cut off the meat first. Where all the meat goes to in this house, I can't think. If a good half of the leg of mutton didn't go down from dinner to-day, I possessed no eyes.'

'They are not going to put me off with bones,' said Roland, ringing the bell. 'When a man's worked within an ace of his life, he must eat. Martha,'—when the maid appeared—'I want some supper.'

'There's no meat in the house, sir. There were some broiled bo——'

'You may eat the bones yourself,' interrupted Roland. 'I never saw such a house as this! Loads of provisions come into it, and yet there's

rarely anything to be had when it's wanted. You must go and order me some oysters. Get four dozen. I am famished. If I hadn't had a substantial tea supplied me out of charity, I should be fainting before this! It's a shame! I wonder my lady puts up with you two incapable servants.'

'There are no oysters to be had at this time, Mr. Roland,' returned Martha, who was accustomed to these interludes, touching the housekeeping. 'The shop shuts up at ten.'

Roland beat on the floor with the heel of his boot. Then he turned round fiercely to Martha. 'Is there *nothing* in the house that's eatable?'

'There's an apple pie, sir.'

'Bring that, then. And while I am going into it, the cook can do me some eggs and ham.'

Gerald had turned round at this, angry in his turn. 'If there's an apple pie, Martha, why could you not have produced it for our supper? You know we were obliged to put up with cheese and butter!'

'The cook told me not to bring it up, Master Gerald. My lady gave no orders. Cook says if she made ten pies a day, they'd get eaten, once you young gentlemen knew of their being in the house.'

'Well?' said Gerald. 'She doesn't provide them out of her pocket.'

Roland paid his court to the apple pie, Gerald joining him. After it was finished, they kept the cook employed some time with the eggs and ham. Then Gerald, who had to be up betimes for morning school, went to bed; and I only hope he did not get the nightmare.

Roland took up his place before the fire, in the same chair and position vacated by Gerald. Thus he waited for Lady Augusta. It was not long before she came in.

'Come and sit down a bit, good mother,' said Roland. 'I want to talk to you.'

'My dear, I am not in a talking humour,' she answered. 'My head aches, and I shall be glad to get to bed. It was a stupid, humdrum evening.'

She was walking to the side table to light her bed candle, but Roland interposed. He drew the couch close to the fire, settled his mother in it, and took his seat with her. She asked him what he had to say so particularly that night.

'I am going to tell you what it is. But don't you fly out at me, mother dear,' he coaxingly added. 'I find I can't get along here at all, mother, and I shall be off to Port Natal.'

Lady Augusta did fly out—with a scream, and a start from her seat. Roland pulled her into it again.

'Now, mother, just listen to me quietly. I can't bear my life at Galloway's. I can't do the work. If I stopped at it, I'm not sure but I should do something desperate. You'd not like to see your son turn jockey, and ride in a pink silk jacket and yellow breeches on the race-course; and you'd not like to see him enlist for a soldier, or run away for a sailor? Well, worse than that might come, if I stopped at Galloway's. Taking it at the very best, I should only get worked into my grave.'

'I will not hear another word, Roland,' interrupted Lady Augusta. 'How can you be so wicked and ungrateful?'

'What is there wicked in it?' asked Roland. 'Besides, you don't know all. I can't tell you what I don't owe in Helstonleigh, and I've not got sixpence to pay it. You'd not like to see me marched off to prison, mother.'

Lady Augusta gave another shriek.

'And there's a third reason why I wish to be away,' went on Roland, drowning the noise. 'But I'll not go into that, because it concerns myself alone.'

Of course the announcement that it concerned himself alone, only made my lady the more inquisitive to hear it. She peremptorily ordered Roland to disclose it to her.

But Roland could be as peremptory as she, and he declined, in positive terms, to explain further.

'It would not afford you any pleasure, mother,' he said, 'and I should not have mentioned it but as an additional reason why I must be off.'

'You unhappy boy! You have been doing something dreadful!'

'It's not over good,' acknowledged Roland. 'Perhaps I'll write you word all about it from London. I have not smothered William Yorke, or set old Galloway's office on fire, and those respected gentlemen are my two *bêtes noires*. So don't look so scared, mother.'

'Roland!' uttered Lady Augusta, as the fact struck her, 'if you go off in this manner, all the money that was paid with you to Mr. Galloway will be lost! I might as well have sent it down the gutter.'

'So I said at the time,' answered cool Roland. 'Never mind that, mother. What's that paltry hundred or two, compared to the millions I shall make? And as to these folks that I owe money to——"

'They'll be coming upon me,' interposed Lady Augusta. 'Heaven knows, *I* have enough to pay.'

'They will do nothing of the sort,' said Roland. 'You have no legal right to pay my debts. Not

one of them but has been contracted since I was of age. If they come to you, tell them so.'

'Roland, Lord Carrick gave you money once or twice when he was here,' resumed Lady Augusta. 'I know he did. What have you done with it all?'

'Money melts,' responded Roland. 'Upon my word and honour, then, I do believe it must melt at times; it vanishes so quickly.'

My lady could not cavil at the assertion. She was only too much given to the same belief herself. Roland continued—

'In a little while—about three months, as I calculate—after my arrival at Port Natal, I shall be in a position to send funds home to pay what I owe; and be assured, I will faithfully send them. There is the finest opening, mother, at Port Natal! Fortunes are being made there daily. In a few years' time I shall come home with my pockets lined, and shall settle down by you for life.'

'If I could but think the prospect was so good a one!' exclaimed Lady Augusta.

'It *is*,' said Roland emphatically. 'Why, mother, Port Natal is all the rage: hundreds are going out. Were there no reasons to urge me away, you would be doing the most unwise thing possible to stand in the light of my going. If I were at something that I liked, that I was not

worked to death at; if I did not owe a shilling; if my prospects here, in short, were first-rate, and my life a bower of rose-leaves, I should do well to throw it all up for Port Natal.'

'But in what manner are these great fortunes made?' wondered Lady Augusta.

'Of course, I shall acquire all that information. Stuck in this know-nothing Helstonleigh, I can only state the fact that they *are* made. I daresay I can find an opening for one or two of the boys out there.'

Lady Augusta—persuadable as ever was a child—began to look upon the plan with less prejudiced eyes—as Roland would have styled it. As to Roland, so fully had he become imbued with the golden harvest to be gathered at Port Natal, that had an angel descended to undeceive him, he would have refused to listen.

'There will be the losing you, Roland,' said Lady Augusta, hesitating whether she should scold or cry.

'Law, what's that?' returned Roland, slightingly. 'You'll get over that in a day, and return thanks that there's one source of trouble less. Look here! If I were in the luck of having a good commission given me in some crack Indian regiment, would you not say, "Oh be joyful," and start me off at once? What are you the worse

for George's being away? Mother!' he added somewhat passionately, '*would* you like to see me tied down for life to an old proctor's office?'

'But, Roland, you cannot go out without money. There'll be your outfit and your passage; and you can't land with empty pockets.'

'As to an outfit,' said Roland, 'you must not run your head upon such a one as George had. A few new shirts, and a pair or two of water-proof boots; that will be about all I shall want. I remember shirts and water-proof boots were mentioned by Bagshaw. What I shall mostly want to buy will be tools, and household utensils: frying-pans, and items of that sort.'

'Frying-pans!' ejaculated Lady Augusta.

'I am sure frying-pans were mentioned,' answered Roland. 'Perhaps it was only one, though, for private use. I'll hunt up Bagshaw's list, and look it over.'

'And where's the money to come from?' repeated my lady.

'I shall get it of Lord Carrick. I know he'll give me what I want. I often talked to him about Port Natal when he was here.'

'I had a letter from him to-day,' said Lady Augusta. 'He will be returning to Ireland next week.'

'Will he, though?' uttered Roland, aroused

by the information. 'I have no time to lose, then.'

'Well, Roland I must hear more about this to-morrow, and consider it over,' said my lady, rising to retire. 'I have not said yet you are to go, mind.'

'I shall go, whether you say it or not,' replied frank Roland. 'And when I come home with my pockets lined, a rich man for life, the first thing I'll buy shall be a case of diamonds for you.'

'Stupid boy!' said she, laughing. 'I shall be too old to wear diamonds then.'

'Oh no, you won't.'

My lady gave him a hearty kiss, and went to bed and to sleep. The visions of Roland were not without their effect upon her, and she had a most delightful dream of driving about in a charming city, whose streets were paved with malachite marble, brilliant to look upon. How many times Roland had dreamt that Port Natal was paved with *gold* he alone knew.

Had Roland been troubled with over-sensitiveness in regard to other people's feelings, and felt himself at a loss how to broach the matter to Mr. Galloway, he might have been pleased to find that the way was, in a degree paved to him. On the following morning, Mr. Galloway was at the office considerably before his usual hour; consequently,

before Roland Yorke. Upon looking over Roland's work of the previous day, he found that a deed—a deed that was in a hurry, too—had been imperfectly drawn out, and would have to be done over again. The cause must have been sheer carelessness, and Mr. Galloway naturally felt angered. When the gentleman arrived, he told him what he thought of his conduct, winding up the reproaches with a declaration that Roland did him no service at all, and would be as well out of the office as in it.

'I am glad of that, sir,' was Roland's answer. 'What I was about to tell you will make no difference, then. I wish to leave, sir.'

'Do you?' retorted Mr. Galloway.

'I am going to leave, sir,' added Roland, rather improving upon the assertion. 'I am going to Port Natal.'

Mr. Galloway was a little taken aback. 'Going to where?' cried he.

'To Port Natal.'

'To Port Natal!' echoed Mr. Galloway in unbounded astonishment, for not an inkling of Roland's long-thought-of project had ever reached him. 'What on earth should you want there?'

'To make my fortune,' replied Roland.

'Oh!' said Mr. Galloway. 'When do you start?'

'It is quite true, sir,' continued Roland. 'Of course I could not go without informing you.'

'Do you start to-day?' repeated Mr. Galloway, in the same mocking tone.

'No, I don't,' said Roland. 'But I *shall* start, sir, before long, and I beg you to believe me. I have talked Lady Augusta over to the plan, and I shall get the money for it from Lord Carrick. I might drum on here all my life and never rise to be anything better than a proctor, besides having my life worked out of me; whereas, if I can get to Port Natal, my fortune's made. Hundreds and thousands of enterprising spirits are emigrating there, and they are all going to make their fortunes.'

Had Mr. Galloway not been angry, he would have laughed outright. 'Yorke,' said he 'did you ever hear of a sickness that fell suddenly upon this kingdom, some years ago? It was called the gold fever. Hundreds and thousands, as you phrase it, caught the mania, and flocked out to the Australian gold-diggings, to "make their fortunes" by picking up gold. Boy!'—laying his hand on Roland's shoulder—'how many of those, think you, instead of making their fortunes, only went out TO DIE?'

'That was not Port Natal, sir.'

'It was not. But, unless some of you wild

young men come to your senses, we shall have a second edition of the Australian madness at Port Natal. Nothing can be more futile than these visionary schemes, Roland Yorke; they are like the apples of Sodom—fair and promising to the eye, full of ashes to the taste. Do not you be deceived by them.'

'One *must* get on at Port Natal, sir.'

'If one does not get "off,"' returned Mr. Galloway, in a cynical tone that chafed Roland's ear. 'The stream that flocked out to the gold-diggings all thought they should get on—each individual was fully persuaded that he should come home in a year or two with a plum in each of his breeches pockets. Where one made his way, Roland—made wealth—many starved, died, vanished, it was not known how; were never heard of by their friends more, or saw old England again. What good do you suppose *you* could do at Port Natal?'

'I intend to do a great deal,' said Roland.

'But suppose you found you could do none—suppose it, I say—what would become of you out in a strange place, without money and without friends?'

'Well,' returned Roland, who was never at a loss for an answer, 'if such an impossible thing as a failure were to turn up, I should come back to

my uncle Carrick, and make him start me in something else.'

'Ah!' mockingly observed Mr. Galloway, 'a rolling stone gathers no moss. Meanwhile, Mr. Roland Yorke, suppose you come down from the clouds to your proper business. Draw out this deed again, and see if you can accomplish it to a little more purpose than you did yesterday.'

Roland, liking the tone less and less, sat down and grew sullen. 'Don't say I did not give you notice, sir,' he observed.

But Mr. Galloway vouchsafed no reply. Indeed, it may be questioned if he heard the remark, for he went into his own room at the moment Roland spoke, and shut the door after him.

'Mocking old caterpillar!' grumbled angry Roland. 'No fortunes at Port Natal! I'd go off, if it was only to tantalize *him!*'

CHAPTER X.

REALLY GONE!

Mrs. Jenkins had many virtues. Besides the cardinal one which has been particularly brought under the reader's notice—that of keeping her husband in due subjection—she also possessed, in an eminent degree, the excellent quality of being a most active housewife. In fact, she had the bump of rule and order, and personally superintended everything—with hands and tongue.

Amongst other careful habits, was that of never letting anybody put a finger on her best sitting-room, for the purpose of cleaning it, except herself. She called it her drawing-room — a small, pretty room over the shop, very well furnished. It was let to Mr. Harper, with the bed-room behind it. Had Lydia dared even to wipe the dust off a table, it might have cost her her place. Mrs. Jenkins was wont to slip her old buff dressing-gown over her clothes, after she was dressed in a morning, and partake herself to this drawing-room. Twice a week it was carefully swept, and

on those occasions a large green handkerchief, tied cornerwise upon Mrs. Jenkins's head, to save her cap from dust, was added to her costume.

On the morning following Roland's communication to Mr. Galloway, Mrs. Jenkins was thus occupied—a dust-pan in one hand, a short hand-broom in the other—for you may be sure she did not sweep *her* carpets with those long, slashing, tear-away brooms that wear out a carpet in six months—and the green kerchief adjusted gracefully over her ears—when she heard a man's footsteps clattering up the stairs. In much astonishment as to who could have invaded the house at that hour, Mrs. Jenkins rose up from her knees and flung open the door.

It was Roland Yorke, coming up at the top of his speed, with a carpet bag in his hand. 'Whatever do you want?' exclaimed she. 'Is anything the matter?'

'The matter is, that I want to say a word to Jenkins,' replied Roland, 'I know he must be in bed, so I just ran straight through the shop and up.'

'I'm sure you are very polite!' exclaimed Mrs. Jenkins. 'For all you knew, I might have been in the room.'

'So you might!' cried easy Roland. 'I never thought of that. I should not have swallowed

you, Mrs. Jenkins. Take care! I have hardly a minute to spare. I shall lose the train.'

On he went, up the second flight of stairs, without the slightest hesitation, and into Jenkins's room, ignoring the ceremony of knocking. Poor Jenkins, who had heard the colloquy, and recognized Roland's voice, was waiting for him with wondering eyes.

'I am off, Jenkins,' said Roland, advancing and bending over the bed. 'I wouldn't go without just saying a word to you.'

'Off where, sir?' returned Jenkins, who could not have looked more bewildered had he been suddenly aroused from sleep.

'To Port Natal. I am sick and tired of everything here, so I'm off at last.'

Jenkins was struck dumb. Of course, the first thought that passed through his mind was Mr. Galloway's discomfiture, unless he had prepared for it. 'This is very sudden, sir!' he cried, when speech came to him. 'Who is replacing you at the office?'

'Nobody,' replied Roland. 'That's the primest bit in the whole play. Galloway will know what work is, now. I told him yesterday morning that I should go, but he went into a tantrum, and didn't take it in earnest. He pointed out to me about sixty things as my day's work to-day, when

he left the office last night; errands to go upon, and writings to do, and answers to give, and the office to mind! A glorious commotion there'll be, when he finds it's all thrown upon his own hands. He'll see how *he* likes work!'

Jenkins could do nothing but stare. Roland went on—

'I have just slipped round there now, to leave a message, with my compliments. It will turn his hair green when he hears it, and finds I am really gone. Do you feel any better, Jenkins?'

The question was put in a different tone; a soft gentle tone—one in which Roland rarely spoke. He had never seen Jenkins look so ill as he was looking now.

'I shall never feel any better in this world, sir.'

'Well, give us your hand, Jenkins; I must be off. You are the only one, old fellow, that I have said good-bye to. You have been a goodlot, Jenkins, and done things for me that other clerks would not. Good luck to you, old chap, whether you go into the next world, or whether you stop in this!'

'God bless you, Mr. Roland! God bless you everywhere!'

Roland leapt down the stairs. Mrs. Jenkins stood at the drawing-room door. 'Good-bye,' said he to her. 'You see I should not have had time to eat you. What d'ye call that thing you have

got upon your head, Mrs. Jenkins? Only wear it to church next Sunday, and you'll set the fashion.'

Away he tore to the station. The first person he saw there, officials excepted, was Hamish Channing, who had gone to it for the purpose of seeing a friend off by the train. The second, was Lady Augusta Yorke.

Hamish he saw first, as he was turning away from getting his ticket. 'Hamish,' said he, 'you'll tell Arthur that I did not come round to him for a last word; I shall write it from London.'

'Roland'—and Hamish spoke more gravely than was his wont—'you are starting upon a wild-goose scheme.'

'It is *not*,' said Roland; 'why do you preach up nonsense? If the worst came to the worst, I should come back to Carrick, and he'd set me on my legs again. I tell you, Hamish, I have a hundred reasons to urge me away from Helston-leigh.'

'Is this carpet-bag all your luggage?'

'All I am taking with me. The rest will be sent afterwards. Had I dispatched the bell-man about the town to announce my departure, I might have got stopped; so I have told nobody, except poor harmless Jenkins.'

Of course it never occurred to proud and improvident Roland that it was possible to travel in

any carriage but a first-class one. A first-class ticket he took, and into a first-class compartment he got. Fortunate it was that it was an empty one. Hamish was filling up the door, talking to him, when sounds of distress were heard coming swiftly along the platform. Before Hamish had time to look what caused them, they were close upon his ear, and he found himself vehemently pushed aside, just as Roland himself might have pushed him. He turned with surprise. Panting, breathless, in tears, wailing out that she should never see her darling son again, stood the Lady Augusta Yorke.

What could be the cause of her appearance there in that state? The cause was Roland. On the previous day, he had held a second conversation with his mother, picturing the glories of Port Natal in colours so vivid, that the thought nearly crossed my lady's mind, couldn't she go too, and make *her* fortune? She then inquired when he meant to start. 'Oh,' answered Roland, carelessly, 'between now and a week's time.' The real fact was, that he contemplated being away on the following morning, before my lady was up. Roland's motive was not an unfilial one. He knew how she excited herself over these partings; the violent, if short, grief to which she gave the reins; he remembered what it had been on the

departure of his brother George. One other motive also held weight with him, and induced reticence. It was very desirable, remembering that he was not perfectly free from claims upon his purse, that he should depart, if not absolutely *sub rosâ*, still without its being extensively known, and that, he knew, would be next door to an impossibility, were the exact period imparted to my lady. Lady Augusta Yorke could not have kept a secret for a single hour, had it been to save her life. Accordingly, she retired to rest in blissful ignorance; and in ignorance she might have remained until he was fairly off, but for Roland's own want of caution. Up with daylight — and daylight, you know, does not surprise us too early when the dark days of November are close at hand — Roland began turning over his drawers and closets, to pick out the few articles he meant to carry with him: the rest would be packed afterwards. This aroused his mother, whose room was underneath his, and she angrily wondered what he could be doing. Not for some time, until after the noise ceased, did the faintest suspicion of the truth break upon her, and it might not then, but for the sudden remembrance which rose in her mind of Roland's particularly affectionate farewell the night previously. Lady Augusta rang her bell.

'Do you know what Mr. Roland is about in his room?' she inquired, when Martha answered it.

'Mr. Roland is gone out, my lady,' was Martha's reply. 'He came down in the kitchen and drank a cup of coffee; and then went out with a carpet-bag.'

'Lady Augusta became excited. 'Where's he gone?' she wildly asked.

'Somewhere by rail, I think, my lady. He said, as he drank his coffee, that he hoped our heads wouldn't ache till he saw us again. Cook and me couldn't think what he meant, my lady.'

My lady divined only too well. She gave a prolonged series of shrieks, jumped out of bed, flung on any clothes that came uppermost, and started in pursuit of him, to the intense wonder of Martha, and to the astonishment of Helston-leigh as she flew wildly through the streets to the station. The sight of Hamish at a carriage-door guided her to her runagate son.

She sprung into the carriage—it was well, I say, that it was empty!—and overwhelmed him with a torrent of reproaches, all the while kissing and hugging him. Not two minutes could be given to their farewell, for the time was up, and Lady Augusta had to descend again, weeping bitterly.

'Take care of her home, Hamish,' said Roland, putting his head out. 'Mother dear, you'll live to say I have done well, yet. You'll see me come home, one of these fine days, with a covered waggon after me, bringing the bags of gold.' Poor Roland!

The train steamed off, and Lady Augusta, to the discomfiture of Hamish, and admiration of the porters and station boys, set off at full speed after it, wringing her hands, and tearing her hair, and sobbing and shrieking out that 'She'd go—she'd go with it! that she should never see her darling boy again!' With some difficulty Hamish soothed her down to tolerable calmness, and put her into a fly.

They were scarcely beyond the station when she suddenly bent forward to Hamish, who sat on the seat opposite to her, and seized his hands. 'Is it true that everybody gets rich who goes to Port Natal?'

The question was a poser for sunny Hamish. He liked to scatter flowers in his path, rather than thorns. How could he tell that grieving woman, that Roland—careless, lazy, improvident Roland—would be almost sure to return in a worse plight than he had gone? 'I have heard of people doing well at Port Natal,' he answered; 'and Roland is young and strong, and has years before him.'

'I cannot think how so much money can be made,' continued my lady, beginning to dry her tears. 'There are no gold fields there, are there?'

'I think not,' said Hamish.

'They must trade, then, I suppose. And, goodness me! what does Roland know about trading? Nothing. He talks of taking out tools and frying-pans.'

'Frying-pans!' repeated Hamish, struck with the item.

'I am sure he said frying-pans. Oh, dear!' sobbed Lady Augusta, 'what a relief it would be if folks never had any children! or if boys did not possess wills of their own! Hamish, you have never given sorrow to *your* mother! I feel that you have not!'

Hamish smiled at her. 'Now you know, Lady Augusta, that your children are your dearest treasures,' cried he, soothingly. 'You would be the most unhappy woman living if you had none.'

'Ah! you can't judge, Mr. Hamish Channing. You have no children of your own.'

'No,' said Hamish laughing, 'but my turn may come some day. Dear Lady Augusta, if Roland has his faults, he has his good qualities. Look on the bright side of things. Look forward with hope to the time that you shall see him

home safe and well again. It will be sure to come.'

'You speak as if you believed it would.'

'Of course I do,' said Hamish. 'And everybody finds me a true prophet.'

They were then passing the Hazledon charity. At the iron gates of the inclosure, talking to an old man, stood the Rev. William Yorke. 'Roland left a message for him!' exclaimed Hamish, half mockingly, as his eyes fell upon the clergyman.

Lady Augusta, all impulse ever, suddenly put her head out at the window and stopped the fly. William Yorke, looking surprised to see who were its inmates, advanced to the door. The lady's tears flowed afresh.

'He is gone, William! My darling, self-willed, troublesome boy is gone, and I shall, perhaps, never see him more, till I am an old woman.'

'Who is gone?' returned Mr. Yorke.

'Roland. Never was a mother so tried as I. He will soon be on the sea, ploughing his way to Port Natal. I wish there was no sea!—no Port Natals! He went off without saying a word to me, and he is GONE!'

Mr. Yorke, bewildered, turned his eyes on Hamish for explanation. He had never heard of the Port Natal project. Hamish nodded in confirmation.

'The best place for him,' said Mr. Yorke. 'He must work for his bread, there, before he eats it.'

Lady Augusta shrieked: 'How cruelly hard you are, William!'

'Not hard, Lady Augusta—kind,' he gently said. 'If your boys were brought up to depend upon their own exertions more, they would make better men.'

'You said you had a message for him from Roland?' resumed Lady Augusta, looking at Hamish.

Hamish smiled significantly. 'Not much of one,' he said, and his lips as he bent towards William Yorke, assumed an expression of sarcastic severity. 'He merely requested me, after he was in the train, to give his love to the Rev. Mr. Yorke, as a parting legacy.'

Either the words or the tone, probably the latter, struck on the Rev. Mr. Yorke's self-esteem and flushed his cheek crimson. Since the rupture with Constance, Hamish, though not interfering in the remotest degree, had maintained a tone of quiet sarcasm to Mr. Yorke. And though Mr. Yorke did not like it, he could not hinder it.

'When does Mr. Channing return?' he abruptly asked of Hamish.

'We shall be expecting him shortly, now.'

Lady Augusta gave the signal for the fly to

drive on. William Yorke put his hand over the door and took hers, as the man began to whip up his horse.

'Do not grieve too much after him, Lady Augusta. It may prove to be the best day's work Roland ever did. God has given him hands, and brains, and a good heart, as I verily believe. If he shall only learn their value out there, let his lines be ever so hard, he may come home a wise and a good man. One of my poor pensioners here said to me, not ten minutes ago, "I was brought to know my Saviour, sir, through hard lines." Lady Augusta, those "hard lines" are never sent in vain.'

CHAPTER XI.

AN ARRIVAL IN A FLY.

Was anybody ever so ill-used as that unfortunate Mr. Galloway? On the morning which witnessed his troublesome clerk's departure, he sat rather longer than usual over his breakfast,never dreaming of the calamity in store for him. That his thoughts were given to business, there was no doubt, for his newspaper lay untouched. In point of fact, his mind was absorbed by the difficulties which had arisen in his office, and the ways and means by which those difficulties might be best remedied.

That it would be impossible to get on with Roland Yorke alone, he had said to himself twenty times; and now he was saying it again, little supposing, poor unconscious man, that even Roland, bad as he was, had taken flight. He had never intended to get along with only Roland, but circumstances had induced him to attempt doing so for a time. In the first place, he had entertained hopes, until very recently, that Jenkins would

recover; in the second place, failing Jenkins, there was nobody in the wide world he would so soon have in his office as Arthur Channing—provided that Arthur could prove his innocence. With Arthur and Roland, he could go on very well, or with Jenkins and Roland; but poor Jenkins appeared to be getting beyond hope; and Arthur's innocence was no nearer the light than it had been, in spite of that strange coming back to him of the money. Moreover, Arthur had declined to return to the office, even to help with the copying, preferring to take it home. All these reflections were pressing upon the mind of Mr. Galloway.

'I'll wait no longer,' said he, as he brought them to a conclusion. 'I'll go this very day after that young Bartlett. I think he might suit, with some drilling. If he turns out a second Yorke, I shall have a nice pair upon my hands. But he can't well turn out as bad as Roland: he comes of a more business-like stock.'

This point settled, Mr. Galloway took up the *Times*. Something in its pages awoke his interest, and he sat longer over it than it had been his wont to do since the departure of Jenkins. It was twenty minutes past nine by his watch when he started for his office.

'Now, I wonder how I shall find that gentle-

man?' soliloquised he, when he drew near. 'Amusing himself, as usual, of course. He'll have made a show of putting out the papers, and there they will be, lying unopened. He'll be at Aunt Sally with the letters, or dancing a quadrille with the stools, or got himself stretched three parts out of the window, saluting the passengers. I never thought he'd do me much good, and should not have taken him, but for the respect I owed the late Dr. Yorke. Now for it!'

It was all very well for Mr. Galloway to say, 'Now for it,' and to put his hand stealthily upon the door-handle, with the intention of pouncing suddenly upon his itinerant pupil. But the door would not open. Mr. Galloway turned, and turned, and shook the handle, like our respected friend Mr. Ketch did when he was locked in the cloisters, but he turned it to no purpose.

'He has not come yet!' wrathfully exclaimed Mr. Galloway. 'All the work of the office on his shoulders and mine, the most busy time of the whole year, and here's half-past nine, and no appearance of him! If I live this day out. I'll complain to Lady Augusta!'

At this moment the housekeeper's little maid came running forward. 'Where's Mr. Yorke?' thundered the proctor, in his anger, as if the child had the keeping of him.

'Please, sir, he's gone to Port Natal.'

'Gone to—what?' uttered Mr. Galloway.

She was unlocking the door, and then stood back to curtsey while Mr. Galloway entered, following in after him—an intelligent child for her years.

'Please, sir, Mr. Yorke came round this morning, while me and missis was a dusting of the place, and he said we was to tell Mr. Galloway, when he come, that he had gone to Port Natal, and left his compliments.'

'It is not true,' cried Mr. Galloway. 'How dare he play these tricks?' he added, to himself.

'Please, sir, missis said she thought as it was true, 'cause he had got a carpet-bag,' returned the young servant.

Mr. Galloway stared at the child. 'You go round at once to Lady Augusta's,' said he, 'and ask what Mr. Yorke means by being so late. I desire that he will come immediately.'

The child flew off, and Mr. Galloway, hardly knowing what to make of matters, proceeded to do what he ought to have found done. He and Jenkins had duplicate keys to the desks, letter-box, &c. Since Jenkins's illness, his keys had been in the possession of Roland. Presently the child came back again.

'Please, sir, her ladyship's compliments, and Mr. Roland have gone to Port Natal.'

The consternation that this would have caused Mr. Galloway, had he believed it, might have been pitiable. An intimation that our clerk, who was in the office the previous night, pursuing his legitimate work, has 'gone to Port Natal,' like we might say of somebody who goes to make a morning call at the next door, is not very credible. Neither did Mr. Galloway give credence to it.

'Did you see her ladyship?' he asked.

'Please, sir, I saw one of the servants, and she went to her ladyship, and brought out the message.'

The young messenger retired, leaving Mr. Galloway to his fate. He persisted in assuming that the news was too absurd to be correct; but a dreadful inward misgiving began to steal over him.

The question was set at rest by the Lady Augusta. Feeling excessively vexed with Roland for not having informed Mr. Galloway of his intended departure—as from the message, it would appear he had not done—she determined to go round; and did so, following closely on the heels of the maid. Her ladyship had already wonderfully recovered her spirits. They were of a mercurial nature, liable to go up and down at touch; and Hamish had contrived to cheer her greatly.

'What does all this mean? Where's Roland?'

began Mr. Galloway, showing little more deference to her ladyship, in his flurry, than he might have shown to Roland himself.

'Did you not know he was going?' she asked.

'I know nothing. Where is he gone?'

'He has started for Port Natal; that is, he has started for London, on his way to it. He went by the eight o'clock train.'

Mr. Galloway sat down in consternation. 'My lady, allow me to inquire what sort of behaviour you call this?'

'Whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, I can't help it,' was the reply of Lady Augusta, 'I'm sure *I* have enough to bear!' she added, melting into tears. 'Of course he ought to have informed you of his intention, Mr. Galloway. I thought he did. He told me he had done so.'

A reminiscence of Roland's communication crossed Mr. Galloway's mind; of his words, 'Don't say I did not give you notice, sir.' He had paid no heed to it then.

'He is just another of my headstrong boys,' grumbled Lady Augusta. 'They are all specimens of wilfulness. I never knew that it was this morning he intended to be off, until he was gone, and I had to run after him to the station. Ask Hamish Channing.'

'He must be mad!' exclaimed Mr. Galloway.

'He says great fortune are made, out at Port Natal. I don't know whether it is so.'

'Great fortunes made!' irascibly responded Mr. Galloway. 'Pittances, that folks go out with, are lost, when they are such as he. That's what it is. Harem-scarem chaps, who won't work, can do no good at Port Natal. Great fortunes made, indeed! I wonder that you can be led away by notions so wild and extravagant, Lady Augusta!'

'I am not led away by them,' peevishly returned Lady Augusta, a recollection of her own elation on the point darting unpleasantly to her mind. 'Where would have been the use of my holding out against it, when he had got his heart upon the thing? He would have gone in spite of me. Do you *not* think fortunes are made there, Mr. Galloway?'

'I am sure they are not, by such as Roland,' was the reply. 'A man who works one hour in the day, and plays eleven, would do less good at Port Natal than he would in his own country. A business man, thoroughly industrious. and possessing some capital, may make something at Port Natal, as he would at any other port. In the course of years he might realise a fortune—in the course of *years*, I say, Lady Augusta.'

This was not precisely the prospect Roland had pictured to Lady Augusta, or to which her own

imagination had lent its hues, and she stood in commotion nearly equal to Mr. Galloway's. 'What on earth will he do, then, when he gets there?' ejaculated she.

'Find out his mistake, my lady, and come home without a coat to his back, as hundreds have done before him, and worked their passage home, to get here. It is to be hoped he will have to do the same. It will teach him what work is.'

'There never was such an unhappy mother as I am!' bewailed my lady. 'They *will* do just as they like, and always would, from George downwards: they won't listen to me. Poor dear boy! reduced, perhaps, to live on brown bread and pea-soup!'

'And lucky to get that!' cried angry Mr. Galloway. 'But the present question, Lady Augusta, is not what he may do when he gets to Port Natal, but what I am to do without him, here. Look at the position it has placed me in!'

Lady Augusta could give neither help nor counsel. In good truth, it was not her fault. But she saw that Mr. Galloway seemed to think it was hers, or that it was partially hers. She departed home again, feeling cross with Roland, feeling damped about his expedition, and beginning to fancy that Port Natal might not, after all, bring her diamonds to wear, or offer her streets paved with malachite marble to drive upon.

Mr. Galloway sat down, and reiterated the question in relation to himself which Lady Augusta had put regarding Roland when he should arrive at Port Naval—What on earth was he to do? He could not close his office; he could not perform its various duties himself; he could not be out of doors and in, at one and the same time, unless, indeed, he cut himself in two! What *was* he to do?

It was more than Mr. Galloway could tell. He put his two hands upon his knees, and stared in consternation, feeling himself grow hot and cold alternately. Could Roland—then whirling along in the train, reclining at his ease, his legs up on the opposite cushion as he enjoyed a luxurious pipe, to the inestimable future benefit of the carriage—have taken a view of Mr. Galloway and his discomfiture, his delight would have been unbounded.

'Incorrigible as he was, he was better than nobody,' ejaculated Mr. Galloway, rubbing up his flaxen curls. 'He could keep office, if he did not do much in it; he received and answered callers; he went out on hasty messages; and, upon a pinch, he did accomplish an hour or so's copying. I am down on my beam-ends, and no mistake. What a simpleton the fellow must be! Port Natal, indeed, for him! If Lord Carrick

were not own brother to my lady, he might have the sense to stop it. Why, he——'

Arrival the first, and nobody to answer it but Mr. Galloway! A fly had driven up and stopped at the door. Nobody appeared to be getting out of it, so Mr. Galloway, perforce, proceeded to see what it wanted. It might contain one of the chapter, or the dean himself!

But, by the time he reached the pavement, the inmates were descending. A short lady, in a black bonnet and short black skirts, had let herself out on the opposite side, and had come round to assist somebody out on this. Was it a ghost, or was it a man? His cheeks were hollow and hectic, his eyes were glistening as with fever, his nostrils and his chest heaved in concert. He had got a fur boa wrapped round his neck, and his over-coat hung in plaits on his tall, attenuated form, which seemed too weak to support itself, or to get down the fly steps without being lifted down.

'Now don't you be in a hurry!' the lady was saying, in a cross tone. 'You'll come pitch into the mud with your nose. Can't you wait? It's my belief you are wanting to do it. Here, let me get firm hold of you; you know you are as weak as ever was a rat!'

You may recognise the voice as belonging to Mrs. Jenkins, and that poor shadow could be no-

body but Jenkins himself, for there certainly was not another like it in all Helstonleigh. Mr. Galloway stood in astonishment, wondering what this new move could mean. The descent accomplished, Jenkins was conducted by his wife through the passage to the office. He went straight to his old place at his desk, and sat down on his stool, his chest palpitating, his breath coming in great sighs —great heaving bursts. Laying his hat beside him, he turned respectfully to Mr. Galloway, who had followed him in, speaking with all his native humility—

'I have come, sir, to do what I can for you in this emergency.'

And there he stopped—coughing, panting, shaking; looking like a man more fit to be lying on his dying bed than to be keeping office. Mr. Galloway gazed at him with compassion. He said nothing. Jenkins at that moment could neither have heard nor answered, and Mrs. Jenkins was out, paying the fly-driver.

The paroxysm was not over when she came in. She approached Jenkins, slightly shook him—her mode of easing the cough—dived in his pockets for his silk handkerchief, with which she wiped his brow, took off the fur from his neck, waited till he was quiet, and began—

'I hope you are satisfied! If you are not, you

ought to be. Who's to know whether you'll get back alive? *I* don't.'

'What did he come for?' asked Mr. Galloway.

'Ah!' said Mrs. Jenkins, 'that's just what I want to know! As if he could do any good in the state he is! Look at him, sir.'

Poor Jenkins, who was indeed a sight to be looked at, turned his wan face upon Mr. Galloway.

'I cannot do much, sir, I know; I wish I could: but I can sit in the office—at least, I hope I can—just to take care of it while you are out, sir, until you can find somebody to replace Mr. Roland.'

'How did you know he was gone off?' demanded Mr. Galloway.

'It was in this way,' interposed Mrs. Jenkins, ages before poor Jenkins could gather breath to answer. 'I was on my hands and knees, brushing the fluff off my drawing-room carpet this morning, when I heard something tearing up the stairs at the rate of a coach-and-six. Who should it be but young Mr. Yorke, on his way to Jenkins in bed, without saying so much as "With your leave," or "By your leave." A minute or two, and down he came again, gave me a little touch of his impudence, and was gone before I could answer. Well, sir, I kept on at my room, and when it was done I went downstairs to see about

the breakfast, never suspecting what was going on with *him*'—pointing her finger at Jenkins. 'I was pouring out his tea when it was ready to take up to him, and putting a bit of something on a plate, which I intended to make him eat, when I heard something creeping down the stairs—stumbling, and panting, and coughing—and out I rushed. There stood he—*he*, Mr. Galloway! dressed and washed as you see him now! he that has not got up lately till evening, and me dressing him, then! "Have you took leave of your senses?" said I to him. "No," said he, "my dear, but I must go to the office to-day; I can't help myself. Young Mr. Yorke's gone away, and there'll be nobody." "And good luck go with him, for all the use he's of here, getting you out of your bed," said I. If Jenkins were as strong as he'd used to be, Mr. Galloway, I should have felt tempted to treat him to a shaking, and then, perhaps, he'd have remembered it!'

'Mr. Roland told me he was going away, sir, and that you had nobody to replace him; indeed, I gathered that you were ignorant of the step,' struck in the quiet, meek voice of poor Jenkins. 'I *could* not stay away, sir, knowing the perplexity you would be put to.'

'No, it's my belief he could not,' tartly chimed in Jenkins's lady. 'He would have tantalised

himself into a fever. Why, Mr. Galloway, had I marched him back to his bed and turned the key upon him, he'd have been capable of letting himself down by a cord from his window, in the face and eyes of all the street, could he have found a pulley to tie it to. Now, Jenkins, I'll have none of your contradiction! you know you would.'

'My dear, I am not contradicting; I am not well enough to contradict,' panted poor Jenkins.

'He would have come off there and then, all by himself: he would, Mr. Galloway, as I am a living sinner!' she hotly continued. 'It's unbeknown how he'd have got here—holding on by the wall, like a snail, or fastening himself on to the tail of a cart; but try at it, in some way, he would! Be quiet, Jenkins! How dare you attempt to interrupt?'

Poor Jenkins had not thought to interrupt; he was only making a movement to pull off his great-coat. Mrs. Jenkins resumed—

'"No," said I to him; "if you must go, you shall be conveyed there, but you don't start without your breakfast." So I sat him down in his chair, Mr. Galloway, and gave him his breakfast—such as it was! If there's one thing that Jenkins is obstinate in, above all others, it's about eating. Then I sent Lydia for a fly, and wrapped up his throat in my boa—and that he wanted to fight against!—and here he is!'

'I wished to get here, sir, before you did,' cried Jenkins, meekly. 'I knew the exertion would set me coughing at first, but, if I had sat awhile before you saw me, I should not have seemed so incapable. I shall be better presently, sir.'

'What are you at with that coat?' tartly asked Mrs. Jenkins. 'I declare your hands are never at rest. Your coat's not to come off, Jenkins. The office is colder than our parlour, and you'll keep it on.'

Jenkins, humbly obeying, began to turn up the cuffs. 'I can do a little writing, sir,' he said to Mr. Galloway. 'Is there anything that is in a hurry?'

'Jenkins,' said Mr. Galloway, 'I could not suffer you to write; I could not keep you here. Were I to allow you to stop, in the state you are, just to serve me, I should lay a weight upon my conscience.'

Mrs. Jenkins looked up in triumph. 'You hear, Jenkins! What did I tell you? I said I'd let you have your way for once—'twas but the cost of the fly; but that if Mr. Galloway kept you here, once he set eyes on your poor creachy body, I'd eat him.'

'Jenkins, my poor fellow,' said Mr. Galloway, gravely, 'you must know that you are not in a state to exert yourself. I shall not forget your

kindness; but you must go back at once. Why, the very draught from the frequent opening of the door would do you an injury; the exertion of speaking to answer callers would be too much for you.'

'Didn't I tell you so, Jenkins, just in them very words?' interrupted the lady.

'I am aware that I am not strong, sir,' acknowledged Jenkins to Mr. Galloway, with a deprecatory glance towards his wife to be allowed to speak. 'But it is better I should be put to a trifle of inconvenience, than that you should, sir. I can sit here, sir, while you are obliged to be out, or occupied in your private room. What could you do, sir, left entirely alone?'

'I don't know what I can do,' returned Mr. Galloway, with an acerbity of tone equal to that displayed by Mrs. Jenkins, for the question recalled all the perplexity of his position. 'Sacrifice yourself to me, Jenkins, you shall not. What absurd folly can have taken off Roland Yorke?' he added, 'Do you know?'

'No, sir, I don't. When Mr. Roland came in this morning, and said he was really off, you might have knocked me down with a feather. He would often get talking about Port Natal, but I never supposed it would come to anything. Mr. Roland was one given to talk.'

'He had some tea at our house the other night,

and was talking about it then,' struck in Mrs. Jenkins. 'He said he was worked to death.'

'Worked to death!' satirically repeated Mr. Galloway.

'I'm afraid, sir, that, through my unfortunate absence, he has found the work heavier, and he grew dissatisfied,' said Jenkins. 'It has troubled me very much.'

'You spoilt him, Jenkins; that's the fact,' observed Mr. Galloway. 'You did his work and your own. Idle young dog! He'll get a sickener at Port Natal.'

'There's one thing to be thankful for, sir,' said patient Jenkins, 'that he has got his uncle, the Earl, to fall back upon.'

'Hark at him!' interrupted Mrs. Jenkins. 'That's just like him! He'd be "thankful" t hear that his worst enemy had an uncle to fall back upon. That's Jenkins all over. But now, what is to be the next movement? she sharply demanded. 'I must get back to my shop. Is he to come with me, or to stop here—a spectacle for everybody that comes in?'

But at this moment, before the question could be decided—though you may rest assured Mrs. Jenkins would only allow it to be decided in her own way—hasty footsteps were heard in the passage, and the door was thrown open by Arthur Channing.

CHAPTER XII.

A RELIC FROM THE BURIAL GROUND.

When Hamish Channing joined the breakfast table at home that morning at nine o'clock, he mentioned his adventure at the station with Lady Augusta Yorke. It was the first intimation they had received of Roland's departure; indeed, the first that some of them had heard of his intention to depart.

Arthur laid down his knife and fork. To him alone could the full consequences of the step occur, as regarded Mr. Galloway.

'Hamish! he cannot actually have gone?'

'That he is actually off by the train to London, I can certify,' was the reply of Hamish. 'Whether he will be off to Port Natal, is another thing. He desired me to tell you, Arthur, that he should write his adieu to you from town.'

'He might have come to see me,' observed Arthur, a shade of resentment in his tone. 'I never thought he would really go.'

'I did,' said Hamish, 'funds permitting him.

If Lord Carrick will supply those, he'll be gone by the first comfortable ship. His mind was so entirely bent upon it.'

'What can he think of doing at Port Natal?' inquired Constance, wonderingly.

'Making his fortune.' But Hamish laughed as he said it. 'Wherever I may have met him latterly, his whole talk has been of Port Natal. Lady Augusta says he is going to take out frying-pans to begin with.'

'Hamish!'

'She said so, Constance. I have no doubt Roland said so to her. I should like to see the sort of cargo he will lay in for the start.'

'What does Mr. Galloway say to it, I wonder?' exclaimed Arthur, that gentleman's perplexities presenting themselves to his mind above anything else. 'I cannot think what he will do.'

'I have an idea Mr. Galloway is as yet unaware of it,' said Hamish. 'Roland assured me that no person whatever knew of his departure, except Jenkins. He called upon him on his way to the station.'

'Unaware of it!' Arthur fell into consternation great as Mr. Galloway's, as he repeated the words. Was it possible that Roland had stolen a march on Mr. Galloway? He relapsed into silence and thought.

'What makes you so sad?' Constance asked of Arthur later, when they were dispersing to their several occupations.

'I am not sad, Constance; only thoughtful. I have been carrying on an inward battle,' he added, half laughingly.

'With your conscience?'

'With my spirit. It is a proud one yet, in spite of all I have had to tame it; a great deal more rebellious than I like it to be.'

'Why, what is the matter, Arthur?'

'Constance, I think I ought to come forward and help Mr. Galloway out of this strait. I think my duty lies in doing it.'

'To return to his office, you mean?'

'Yes; until he can see his way out of the wood. But it goes against the grain.'

'Arthur dear, I know you will do it,' she gently said. 'Were our duty always pleasant to us, where would be the merit in fulfilling it?'

'I shall do it,' he answered. 'To that I have made up my mind. The difficulty is, Constance, to do it with a good grace.'

She looked at him with a loving smile. 'Only try. A firm will, Arthur, will conquer even a rebellious spirit.'

Arthur knew it. He knew how to set about it. And a little later, he was on his way to Close-

street, with the best grace in the world. Not only to appearance, mind you, but inwardly. It is a GREAT thing, reader, to conquer the risings of a proud spirit! To bring it from its haughty, rebellious pedestal, down to cordiality and love. Have you learnt the way?

Some parchments under his arm, for he had stayed to collect them together, Arthur bounded in to Mr. Galloway's. The first object his eyes fell on was that shadowy form, coughing and panting. 'Oh, Jenkins!' he involuntarily uttered, 'what do you do out of your house?'

'Anxiety for me has brought him out,' said Mr. Galloway. 'How can I scold him?'

'I could not rest, sir, knowing my master was alone in his need,' cried Jenkins to Arthur. 'What is to become of the office, sir, with nobody in it?'

'But he is not alone,' said Arthur: and, if he had wanted a reward for coming forward, that moment would have supplied it, in satisfying poor Jenkins. 'If you will allow me, sir,' Arthur added, turninig frankly to Mr. Galloway, 'I will take my place here, until you shall be suited.'

'Thank you,' emphatically replied Mr. Galloway. 'It will relieve me from a serious embarrassment.'

Arthur went to his old desk, and sat down on his old stool, and began settling the papers and

other things on it, just as if he had not been absent an hour. 'I must still attend the cathedral as usual, sir,' he observed to Mr. Galloway; 'but I can give you up the whole of my other time. I shall be better for you than nobody.'

'I would rather have you here than anybody else, Channing; he'—laying his hand on Jenkins's shoulder—'excepted. I offered for you to return before.'

'I know you did, sir,' replied Arthur, in a brief tone—one that seemed to intimate he would prefer not to pursue the subject.

'And now are you satisfied?' struck in Mrs. Jenkins to her husband.

'I am more than satisfied,' answered Jenkins clasping together his hands. 'With Mr. Arthur in the office, I shall have no fear of its missing me, and I can go home in peace, to die.'

'Please just to hold your tongue about dying,' reprimanded Mrs. Jenkins. 'Your business is to get well, if you can. And now I am going to see after a fly. A pretty dance I should have had here, if he had persisted in stopping, bringing him messes and cordials every other half-hour! Which would have worn out first, I wonder, the pavement, or my shoes?'

'Channing,' said Mr. Galloway, 'let us understand each other. Have you come here to do any-

thing there may be to do—out-of-doors as well as in? In short, to be my clerk, as heretofore.'

'Of course I have, sir; until'—Arthur spoke very distinctly—'until you shall be able to suit yourself; not longer.'

'Then take this paper round to Deering's office, and get it signed. You will have time to do it before college.'

Arthur's answer was to put on his hat, and vault away with the paper. Jenkins turned to Mr. Galloway as soon as they were alone. 'Oh! sir, keep him in your office!' he earnestly said. 'He will soon be of more value to you than I have ever been!'

'That he will not, Jenkins. Nor anybody else.'

'Yes, he will, sir! He will be able to replace you in the chapter-house upon any emergency, and I never could do that, you know, sir, not being a gentleman. When you have him to yourself alone, sir, you will see his value; and I shall not be missed. He is steady and thoughtful beyond his years, sir, and every day will make him older.'

'You forget the charge against him, Jenkins. Until he shall be cleared of that—if he can be cleared of it—he will not be of great value to any one, certainly not to me.'

'Sir,' said Jenkins, raising his wan face, its hectic deepening, and his eye lighting, while his

voice sunk to a whisper, so deep as to savour of solemnity, 'that time will come! He never did it, and he will as surely be cleared, as that I am now saying it! Sir, I have thought much about this accusation; it has troubled me in sleep; but I know that God will bring the right to light for those who trust in Him. If anybody ever put their trust in God, it is Mr. Arthur Channing. I lie and think of all this, sir. I seem to be so near God, now,' Jenkins went on dreamily, 'that I know the right must come to light; that it will come in God's own good time. And I believe I shall live to see it!'

'You have certainly firm faith in his innocence, Jenkins. How then do you account for his very suspicious manner?'

'It does not weigh with me, sir. I could as soon believe a good wholesome apple-tree would bring forth poisonous berries, as that Mr. Arthur would be guilty of a deliberately bad action. Sometimes I have thought, sir, when puzzling over it, that he may be screening another. There's no telling how it was. I hear, sir, that the money has been returned to you.'

'Yes. Was it he who told you?'

'It was Mr. Roland Yorke who told me, sir. Mr. Roland is another, sir, who has had firm faith in his innocence from the first.'

'Much his faith goes for!' ejaculated Mr. Galloway, as he came back from his private room with a letter, which he handed to Jenkins, who was skilled in caligraphy. 'What do you make of it?' he asked. 'It is the letter which came with the returned money.'

'It is a disguised hand, sir, there's no doubt of that,' replied Jenkins, when he had surveyed it critically. 'I do not remember to have seen any person write like it.'

Mr. Galloway took it back to his room, and presently a fly drove up with Mrs. Jenkins inside it. Jenkins stood at the office door, his hat in his hand, and his face turned upon the room. Mrs. Jenkins came up and seized his arm, to marshal him to the fly.

'I was but taking a farewell of things, sir,' he observed to Mr. Galloway. 'I shall never see the old spot again.'

Arthur arrived just as Jenkins was got in. He put his hand over the door. 'Make yourself easy, Jenkins, it will all go on smoothly here. Goodbye, old fellow! I'll come and see you very soon.'

'How he breaks, does he not, sir?' exclaimed Arthur to Mr. Galloway.

'Ay! he's not long for this world!'

The fly proceeded on its way, Mrs. Jenkins, with her snappish manner, though really not un-

kind heart, lecturing Jenkins on his various shortcomings until it drew up at their own door. As Jenkins was being helped down from it, one of the college boys passed at a great speed; a railroad was nothing to it. It was Stephen Bywater. Something, legitimate or illegitimate, had detained him, and now the college bell was going.

He caught sight of Jenkins, and, hurried as he was, much of punishment as he was bargaining for, it had such an effect upon him, that he pulled up short. Was it a man, or a shadow? Was it Jenkins, or his ghost? Bywater had never been so struck with any sight before.

The most appropriate way in which it occurred to him he could give vent to his surprise, was to prop his back against the shop door-post, and indulge in a soft, prolonged whistle. He could not take his eyes from Jenkins's face. 'Is it you, or your shadow, Jenkins?' he asked, making room for the invalid to pass.

'It's myself, sir, thank you. I hope you are well, sir.'

'Oh, I'm always jolly,' replied Bywater, and then he began to whistle again.

He followed Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins into the shop with his eyes; that is, they followed Jenkins. Bywater had heard, as a matter of necessity, of Jenkins's illness, and had given as much thought

to it as he would have done if told Jenkins had the head-ache; but to fancy him like *this*, had never occurred to Bywater.

Now, somewhere beneath Bywater's waistcoat, there really was a little bit of heart; and, as he thus looked, a great fear began to thump against it. He followed Jenkins into the parlour. Mrs. Jenkins, after divesting Jenkins of his coat, and her boa, planted him right before the fire in his easy-chair, with a pillow to his back, and was now whisking down into the kitchen, regardless of certain customers waiting in the shop to be served.

Bywater, unasked, sat himself down in a chair near to poor Jenkins and his panting breath, and indulged in another long stare. 'I say, Jenkins,' said he, 'what's the matter with you?'

Jenkins took the question literally. 'I believe it may be called a sort of decline, sir. I don't know any other name for it.'

'Shan't you get well?'

'Oh, no, sir! I don't look for that, now.'

The fear thumped at Bywater's heart worse than before. A past vision of locking up old Ketch in the cloisters, through which pastime Jenkins had come to a certain fall, was uncomfortably present to Bywater just then. He had been the ringleader.

'What brought it on?' asked he.

'Well, sir, I suppose it was to come,' meekly replied Jenkins. 'I have had a bad cough, spring and autumn, for a long while now, Master Bywater. My brother went off just the same, sir, and so did my mother.'

Bywater pushed his honest, red face forward: but it was not looking quite so impudent as usual. 'Jenkins,' said he, plunging headlong into the fear, 'DID—THAT—FALL—DO—IT?'

'Fall, sir! What fall?'

'That fall down from the organ loft. Because that was my fault. I had the most to do with locking up the cloisters, that night.'

'Oh, bless you, sir, no! Never think that. Master Bywater'—lowering his voice till it was as grave as Bywater's—'that fall did me good—good, sir, instead of harm.'

'How do you make out that?' asked Bywater, drawing his breath a little easier.

'Because, sir, in the few days' quiet that I had in bed, my thoughts seemed in an accountable manner to be drawn to thinking of heaven. I can't rightly describe, sir, how or why it could have been. I remember his lordship the bishop talked to me a little bit in his pleasant, affable way, about the necessity of always being prepared; and my wife's Bible lay on the drawers by my bed's head, and I used to pick up that. But I

don't think it was either of those causes much: I believe, sir, that it was God himself working in my heart. I believe He sent the fall in His good mercy. After I got up I seemed to know that I should soon go to Him; and—I hope it is not wrong to say it—I seemed to wish to go.'

Bywater was somewhat puzzled. 'I am not speaking about your heart and religion, and all that Jenkins. I want to know if the fall helped to bring on this illness?'

'No, sir; it had nothing to do with it. The fall hurt my head a little—nothing more; and I got well from it directly. This illness, which has been taking me off, must have been born with me.'

'Hoo——' Bywater's shout, as he tossed up his trencher, was broken in upon by Mrs. Jenkins. She had been beating up an egg with sugar and wine, and now brought it in in a tumbler.

'My dear,' said Jenkins, 'I don't feel to want it.'

'Not want it!' said Mrs. Jenkins, resolutely. And in two seconds she had laid hold of him, and it was down his throat. 'I can't stop parleying here all day, with my shop alive with customers.' Bywater laughed, and she retreated.

'If I could eat gold, sir, she'd get it for me,' said Jenkins; 'but my appetite fails. She's a good wife, Master Bywater.'

'Stunning,' acquiesced Bywater. 'I wouldn't mind a wife myself, if she'd feed me up with eggs and wine.'

'But for her care, sir, I should not have lasted so long. She has had great experience with the sick.

Bywater did not answer. Rising to go, his eyes had fixed themselves upon some object on the mantel-piece, as pertinaciously as they had previously been fixed upon Jenkins's face. 'I say, Jenkins, where did you get this?' he exclaimed.

'That, sir? Oh I remember. My old father brought it in yesterday. He had cut his hand with it. Where now did he say he found it? In the college burial-yard, I think, Master Bywater.'

It was part of a small broken phial, of a peculiar shape, which had once apparently contained ink; an elegant shape, it may be said, not unlike a vase. Bywater began turning it about in his fingers; he was literally feasting his eyes upon it.

'Do you want to keep it, Jenkins?'

'Not at all, sir. I wonder my wife did not throw it away before this.'

'I'll take it, then,' said Bywater, slipping it into his pocket. 'And now I'm off. Hope you'll get better, Jenkins.'

'Thank you, sir. Let me put the broken bottle in paper, Master Bywater. You will cut your fingers if you carry it loose in your pocket.'

'Oh, that be bothered!' answered Bywater. 'Who cares for cut fingers?'

He pushed himself through Mrs. Jenkins's shop of customers, with as little ceremony as Roland Yorke might have used, and went flying towards the cathedral. The bell ceased as he entered. The organ pealed forth; and the Dean and Chapter, preceded by some of the bedesmen, were entering from the opposite door. Bywater ensconced himself behind a pillar, until they should have traversed the body, crossed the nave, and were safe in the choir. Then he came out, and made his way to old Jenkins the bedesman.

The old man, in his black gown, stood near the bell ropes, for he had been one of the ringers that day. Bywater noticed that he had got his left hand partially tied up in a handkerchief.

'Halloa, old Jenkins,' said he, *sotte voce*, 'what have you done with your hand?'

'I gave it a nasty cut yesterday, sir, just in the ball of the thumb. I wrapped my handkecher round it just now, for fear of opening it again, while I was ringing the bell. See,' said he, taking off the handkerchief and showing the place to Bywater.

'What an old muff you must be, to cut yourself like that!'

But I didn't do it for the purpose,' returned

the old man. 'We was ordered into the burial-ground to put it a bit to rights, and I fell down with my hand on a broken phial. I ain't as active as I was. I say, though, sir, do you know that service has begun?'

'Let it begin,' returned careless Bywater. 'This was the bottle you fell over, was it not? I found it on Joe's mantelpiece, just now.'

'Ay, that was it. It must have laid there some time. A good three months, I know.'

Bywater nodded his head. He returned the bottle to his pocket, and went to the vestry to get his surplice. Then he slid into college under the severe eyes of the Reverend Mr. Pye, which were bent upon him from the chanting desk, and ascended his stall just in time to take his part in the *Venite, exultemus Domino.*

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RETURN HOME.

It almost seemed, to the grateful heart of Mr. Channing, as if the weather had prolonged its genial fineness on purpose for him. A more charming autumn had never been known at Borcette, and up to the very hour of Mr. Channing's departure, there were no signs of winter. Taking it as a whole, it had been the same at Helstonleigh. Two or three occasional wet days, two or three cold and windy ones; but they soon passed over: and people said to each other how this fine weather would shorten the winter.

Never did November turn out a more lovely day than the one that was to witness Mr. Channing's return. The sun shone brightly; the blue sky was without a cloud. All Nature seemed to have put on a smiling face to hail him a welcome. And yet—to what was he returning?

For once in his life, Hamish Channing shrunk from meeting his father and mother. How should

he break the news to them? They were arriving full of joy, of thankfulness at the restoration of health to Mr. Channing: how could Hamish mar it with the news regarding Charles? Told it must be; and he must be the one to do it. In good truth, Hamish was staggered at the task. His own hopeful belief that Charley would some day 'turn up,' was beginning to die out; for every hour that dragged by, without bringing him, certainly gave less and less chance of it. And even if Hamish had retained hope himself, it was not likely he could impart it to Mr. or Mrs. Channing.

'I shall get leave from school this afternoon,' Tom suddenly exclaimed that morning at breakfast.

'For what purpose?' inquired Hamish.

'To go up to the station and meet them.'

'No, Tom. You must not go the station.'

'Who says so?' sharply cried Tom.

'I do,' replied Hamish.

'I daresay! that's good!' returned Tom, speaking in his hasty spirit. 'You know you are going yourself, Hamish, and yet you would like to deprive me of the same pleasure. Why, I'd not miss being there for anything! Don't say, Hamish, that you are never selfish.'

Hamish turned upon him with a smile, but his

tone changed to sadness. 'I wish with all my heart, Tom, that you, or somebody else, could go and meet them, instead of myself, and undertake what I shall have to do. I can tell you I never had a task imposed upon me that I found so uncongenial as the one I must go through this day.'

Tom's voice dropped a little of its fierce shade. 'But, Hamish, there's no reason why I should not meet them at the station. That will not make it the better or the worse for you.'

'I will tell you why I think you should not,' replied Hamish; 'why it will be better that you should not. It is most desirable that they should be home, here, in this house, before the tidings are broken to them. I should not like them to hear of it in the streets or at the station; especially my mother.'

'Of course not,' assented Tom.

'And, were you at the station,' quietly went on Hamish to him, 'the first question would be, "Where's Charley?" If Tom Channing can get leave of absence from school, Charley can.'

'I could say—'

'Well?' said Hamish, for Tom had stopped.

'I don't know what I could say,' acknowledged Tom.

'Nor I. My boy, I have thought it over, and

the conclusion I come to, if you appear at the station, is this: either that the tidings must be told to them, then and there; or else an evasion, bordering upon an untruth. If they do not see you there, they will not inquire particularly after Charles; they will suppose you are both in school.'

'I declare I never set my mind upon a thing but some hindrance starts in to frustrate it!' cried Tom, in vexation. But he relinquished his intention from that moment.

Chattering Annabel threw up her head. 'As soon as papa and mamma come home, we shall put on mourning, shall we not? Constance was talking about it with Lady Augusta.'

'Do not talk of mourning, child,' returned Hamish. '*I* can't give him up, if you do.'

Afternoon came, and Hamish proceeded alone to the station. Tom, listening to the inward voice of reason, was in school, and Arthur was occupied in the Cathedral; the expected time of their arrival being towards the close of afternoon service. Hamish had boasted that he should *walk* his father through Helstonleigh for the benefit of beholders, if he happily came home capable of walking; but, like poor Tom and *his* plan, that had to be relinquished. In the first half-dozen paces they would meet half-a-dozen gossipers, and

the first remark from each, after congratulations, would be, 'What a sad thing this is about your little Charles!' Hamish lived in doubt whether it might not, by some untoward luck, come out at the station, in spite of his precaution in keeping away Tom.

But, so far, all went well. The train came in to its time, and Hamish, his face lighted with excitement, saw his father once more in possession of his strength, descending without assistance from the carriage, walking alone on the platform. Not in the full strength and power of yore: that might never be again. He stooped slightly, and moved slowly, as if his limbs were yet stiff, limping a little. But that he was now in a good sound state of health was evident; his face betrayed it. Hamish did not know whose hands to clasp first; his, or his mother's.

'Can you believe that it is myself, Hamish?' asked Mr. Channing, when the first few words of thankful greeting had passed.

'I should hide my head for ever as a false prophet if it could be anybody else,' was the reply of Hamish. 'You know I always said you would so return. I am only in doubt whether it is my mother.'

'What is the matter with me, Hamish?' asked Mrs. Channing.

'Because you would make about two of the thin, pale, careworn Mrs. Channing that went away,' cried he, turning his mother round to regard her, deep love shining out from his gay blue eyes. 'I hope you have not taken to rouge your cheeks, ma'am, but I am bound to confess they look uncommonly like it.'

Mrs. Channing laughed merrily. 'It has done me untold good, Hamish, as well as papa; it seems to have set me up for years to come. The seeing him grow better day by day would have effected it, without any other change.'

Mr. Channing had actually gone himself to see after the luggage. How strange it seemed! Hamish caught him up. 'If you can give yourself trouble now, sir, there's no reason that you should do so, while you have your great lazy son at your elbow.'

'Hamish, boy, I am proud of doing it.'

It was soon collected. Hamish hastily, if not carelessly, told a porter to look to it, took Mr. Channing's arm, and marched him to the fly, which Mrs. Channing had already found. Hamish was in lively dread of some officious friend or other coming up, who might drop a hint of the state of affairs.

'Shall I help you in, father?'

'I can help myself now, Hamish. I remember

you promised me that I should have no fly on my return. You have thought better of it.'

'Yes, sir, wishing to get you home before bed-time, which might not be the case if you were to show yourself in the town, and stop for all the interruptions.'

Mr. Channing stepped into the fly. Hamish followed him, first giving the driver a nod. 'The luggage! The luggage!' exclaimed Mrs. Channing as they moved off.

'The porter will bring it, mother; he would have been a month putting it on the fly.'

How could they suppose anything was the matter? Not a suspicion of it ever crossed them. Never had Hamish appeared more light-hearted: in fact, in his self-consciousness, Hamish a little overdid it. Let him get them home before the worst came!

'We find you all well, I conclude!' said Mrs. Channing. 'None of them came up with you! Arthur is in college, I suppose, and Tom and Charles are in school.'

'It was Arthur's hour for college,' remarked Hamish, conveniently ignoring the rest of the sentence. 'But he ought to be out now. Arthur is at Galloway's again,' he added. 'He did not write you word, I believe, as you were so shortly expected home.'

Mr. Channing turned his glance on his son like lightning. 'Cleared, Hamish?'

'In my opinion, yes. In the opinion of others, I fear not much more than he previously was.'

'And himself?' asked Mr. Channing. 'What does he say now?'

'He does not speak of it to me.'

Hamish put his head out at the window as he spoke, nodding to somebody who was passing. A question of Mr. Channing's called it in again.

'Why has he gone back to Galloway's?'

Hamish laughed. 'Roland Yorke took an impromptu departure one fine morning, for Port Natal, leaving the office and Mr. Galloway to do the best they could with each other. Arthur buried his grievances, and offered himself to Mr. Galloway in the emergency. I am not quite sure that I should have been so forgiving.'

'Hamish! He has nothing to forgive Mr. Galloway. It is on the other side.'

'I am uncharitable, I suppose,' remarked Hamish. 'I cannot like Mr. Galloway's treatment of Arthur.'

'But what is it you say about Roland York and Port Natal?' interposed Mrs. Channing. 'I do not understand.'

'Roland is really gone, mother. He has been in London these ten days, and it is expected that

every post will bring news that he has sailed. Roland has picked up a notion somewhere that Port Natal is an enchanted land, converting poor men into rich ones; and he is going to try what it will do for him, Lord Carrick fitting him out. Poor Jenkins is sinking fast.'

'Changes! changes!' remarked Mr. Channing. 'Go away but for two or three months, and you must find them on return. Some gone; some dying; some—'

'Some restored, who were looked upon as incurable,' interrupted Hamish. 'My dear father, I will not have you dwell on dark things the very moment of your arrival; the time for that will come soon enough.'

Judy nearly betrayed all; and Constance's aspect might have betrayed it, had the travellers been suspicious. She, Constance, came forward in the hall, white and trembling. When Mrs. Channing shook hands with Judy, she put an unfortunate question—'Have you taken good care of your boy?' Judy knew it could only allude to Charles, and for an answer she set up a noise, between a cry and a sob, that might have been heard in the far-off college school-room. Hamish took Judy by the shoulders, bidding her go out and see whether any rattletraps were left in the fly, and so turned it off.

They were all together in the sitting-room—Mr. and Mrs. Channing, Hamish, Constance, Arthur, and Annabel; united, happy, as friends are and must be when meeting after a separation; talking of this, talking of that, imparting notes of what had occurred on either side. Hamish showed himself as busy as the rest; but Hamish felt all the while upon a bed of thorns, for the hands of the time-piece were veering on for five, and he must get the communication over before Tom came in. At length Mrs. Channing went up to her room, accompanied by Constance; Annabel followed. And now came Hamish's opportunity. Arthur had gone back to Mr. Galloway's, and he was alone with his father. He plunged into it at once; indeed, there was no time for delay.

'Father!' he exclaimed, with deep feeling, his careless manner changing as by magic, 'I have very grievous news to impart to you. I would not enter upon it before my mother; though she must be told of it also, and at once.'

Mr. Channing was surprised; more surprised than alarmed. He never remembered to have seen Hamish betray so much emotion. A thought crossed his mind that Arthur's guilt might have been brought clearly to light.

'Not that,' said Hamish. 'It concerns—. Father, I do not like to enter upon it! I

shrink from my task. It is very bad news indeed.'

'You, my children, are all well,' cried Mr. Channing, hastily, speaking the words as a fact, not as a question. 'What other news 'very bad' can be in store?'

'You have not seen us all,' was the answer of Hamish. And Mr. Channing, alarmed then, looked inquiringly at him.

'It concerns Charles. An—an accident has happened to him.'

Mr. Channing sat down and shaded his eyes. He was a moment or two before he spoke. 'One word, Hamish: is he dead?'

Hamish stood before his father and laid his hand affectionately upon his shoulder. 'Father, I *wish* I could have prepared you better for it!' he exclaimed, with emotion. 'We do not know whether he is dead or alive.'

Then he explained—explained more in summary than in detail—touching lightly upon the worst features of the case, enlarging upon his own hopeful view of it. Bad enough it was, at the best, and Mr. Channing found it so. *He* could feel no hope. In the shock of grief, he turned almost with resentment upon Hamish.

'My son, I did not expect this treatment from you.'

'I have taken enough blame to myself; I know he was left in my charge,' sadly replied Hamish; 'but, indeed, I do not see how I could have helped it. Although I was in the room when he ran out of it, I was buried in my own thoughts, and never observed his going. I had no suspicion anything was astir that night with the college boys. Father, I would have saved his life with my own.'

'I am not blaming you for the fact, Hamish; blame is not due to you. Had I been at home myself, present, I might no more have stopped his going out than you did. But you ought to have acquainted me instantly. A whole month, and I to be left in ignorance!'

'We did it for the best. Father, I assure you that not a stone has been left unturned to find him; alive, or—or dead. You could not have done more had you hastened home; and it has been so much suspense and grief spared to you.'

Mr. Channing relapsed into silence. Hamish glanced uneasily to that ever advancing clock. Presently he spoke.

'My mother must be told before Tom comes home. It will be better that you take the task upon yourself, father. Shall I send her in?'

Mr. Channing looked at Hamish, as if he scarcely understood the import of the words.

From Hamish he looked to the clock. 'Ay; go and send her.'

Hamish went to his mother's room, and returned with her. But he did not enter. He merely opened the door, and shut her in. Constance, with a face more scared than ever, came and stood in the hall. Annabel stood there. Judy, wringing her hands, and sending off short ejaculations of lament in an under tone, came to join them, and Sarah stood peeping out of the kitchen door. They remained gazing at the parlour door, dreading the effect of the communication that was going on inside.

'If it had been that great big Tom, it wouldn't matter so much,' wailed Judith, in a tone of resentment. 'The missis would know that *he'd* be safe to turn up, some time or other; a strong fellow like him!'

A sharp cry within the room. The door was flung open, and Mrs. Channing came forth, her face pale, her eyes wild, her hands lifted. 'It cannot be true! It cannot be! Hamish! Judith! Where is he?'

Hamish folded her hands in his, and gently drew her in again. They all followed. No reason why they should not, now that the communication was made. Almost at the same moment, Mr. Huntley arrived.

Of course, the first thought that had occurred

to the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Channing was, that had *they* been at home to direct affairs in the search, Charley would have been found. It is the thought that would occur to us all: we never give other people credit for doing as much as we should have done. 'This might have been tried, and the other might have been tried.' It makes little difference when told that they *have* been tried; for then we fall back upon some other suggestion. Mrs. Channing reproached Hamish with keeping it from them.

'My dear lady, you must blame me, not him,' interposed Mr. Huntley. 'Left to himself, Hamish would have started Arthur off to you, post haste. It was I who suggested the desirability of keeping you in ignorance; it was I who brought Hamish to see it: and I know that, when the brunt of your grief shall have passed, you will acknowledge that it was the best, the wisest, and the kindest course.'

'But there are so many things that we could have suggested; that perhaps none but a father or mother would think of!' urged Mrs. Channing, lifting her yearning face. They wished they could see her weep.

'You could have suggested nothing that has not been done,' returned Mr. Huntley. 'Believe me, dear Mrs. Channing! We have had many

good suggestors, many good counsellors. Butterby has had the conducting of the search.'

Mr. Channing turned to them. He was standing at the far window. 'I should like to see Butterby.'

'He will be here in an hour's time,' said Hamish. 'I knew you would wish to see him, and I requested him to come.'

'The worst feature of the whole,' put in Judith, with as much acrimony as ever was displayed by Mr. Ketch, 'is that them boys should not have got their deserts. They have not as much as had a birching; and I say that the college masters ought to be hooted. I'd "ghost" 'em!'

'The punishment lies in abeyance for the present,' explained Hamish. 'A different punishment from any the head master could inflict will be required, should—should—' Hamish stopped. He did not like to say, in the presence of his mother, 'should the body be found.' 'Some of them are suffering pretty well, as it is,' he continued, after a brief pause. 'Master Bill Simms lay in bed for a week with fright, and was obliged to have Mr. Hurst to him. Report goes, that Mr. Hurst soundly flogged his son, by way of a commencement, for his share.'

A pushing open of the outer door, a bang, and hasty footsteps in the hall. Tom had arrived.

Tom, with his sparkling eyes, his glowing face. They sparkled for his father only in that first moment; his father, who turned and *walked* to meet him.

'Oh, papa! What baths those must be!' cried honest Tom. 'If ever I get rich, I'll go over there and make them a present of a thousand pounds. To think that nothing else should have cured you!'

'I think something else must have had a hand in curing me, Tom.'

Tom looked up inquiringly. 'Ah, papa! You mean God.'

'Yes, my boy. God has cured me. The baths were but instruments in His hands.'

CHAPTER XIV.

'THE SHIP'S DROWNED.'

REJECTING all offers of refreshment—the welcome-home meal which Constance had planned, and Judith prepared, both with so much loving care—Mr. Channing resolved to seek out Butterby at once. In his state of suspense, he could neither wait, nor eat, nor remain still; it would be a satisfaction only to see Butterby, and hear his opinion.

Mr. Huntley accompanied him; scarcely less proud than Hamish would have been, to walk once more arm in arm with Mr. Channing. But, as there is not the least necessity for our going to the police-station, for Mr. Butterby could tell us no more than we already know, we will just pay a short visit to Mr. Stephen Bywater.

That gentleman stood in the cloisters, into which he had seduced old Jenkins, the bedesman, having waited for the dusk hour, that he might make sure nobody else would be there. Ever since the

last day you saw old Jenkins in the cathedral, he had been laid up in his house, with a touch of what he called his 'rheumatiz.' Decrepit old fellows were all the bedesmen, monopolising enough 'rheumatiz' between them for half the city. If one was not laid up, another would be, especially in winter. However, old Jenkins had come out again to-day, to the gratification of Mr. Bywater, who had been wanting him. The cloisters were all but dark, and Mr. Ketch must undoubtedly be most agreeably engaged, or he would have shut up before.

'Now then, old Jenkins!' Bywater was saying. 'You show me the exact spot, and I'll give you sixpence for smoke.'

Old Jenkins hobbled to one of the mullioned windows near to the college entrance, and looked over into the dim grave-yard. ''Twere about four or six yards off here,' said he.

'But I want to know the precise spot,' returned Bywater. 'Get over, and show me!'

The words made old Jenkins laugh. 'Law, sir! me get over there! You might as well ask me to get over the college. How be I to do it?'

'I'll hoist you up,' said Bywater.

'No, no,' answered the man. 'My old bones be past hoisting now. I shouldn't never get back

alive, once I were propelled over into that there grave-yard.'

Bywater felt considerably discomfited. 'What a weak rat you must be, old Jenkins! Why, it's nothing!'

'I know it ain't — for you college gents. 'Twouldn't have been much for me when I were your age. Skin nor clothes warn't of much account to me then.'

'Oh, it's that, is it?' returned Bywater, contemptuously. 'Look here, old Jenkins! if your things come to the wars, I'll get my uncle to look you out some of his old ones. I'll give you sixpence for bacca, I say!'

The old bedesman shook his head. 'If you give me a waggin load of baccy, I couldn't try at getting over there. You might just as good put a babby in arms on the ground, and tell it to walk!'

'Here! get out of the way for an old muff!' was Bywater's rejoinder; and in a second he had mounted the window-frame, and dropped into the burial-ground. 'Now then, old Jenkins, I'll go about, and you call out when I come to the right spot.'

By these means, Bywater arrived at a solution of the question, whereabouts the broken phial was found; old Jenkins pointing out the spot, to the

best of his ability. Bywater then vaulted back again, and alighted safe and sound in the cloisters. Old Jenkins asked for his sixpence.

'Why, you did not earn it!' said Bywater. 'You wouldn't get over!'

'A sixpence is always useful to me,' said the old man! 'and some of you gents has 'em in plenty. I ain't paid much; and Joe, he don't give me much. 'Tain't him; he'd give away his head, and always would—it's her. Precious close she is with the money, though she earns a sight of it, I know, at that shop of her'n, and keeps Joe like a king. Wine, and all the rest of it, she have got for him, since he was ill. "There's a knife and fork for ye, whenever ye like to come," she says to me, in her tart way. But deuce a bit of money will she give. If it weren't for one and another friend a giving me a odd sixpence now and then, Master Bywater, I should never hardly get no baccy!'

'There; don't bother!' said Bywater, dropping the coin into his hand.

'Why, bless my heart, who's this, a prowling in the cloisters at this hour?' exclaimed a well-known, cracked voice, advancing upon them simultaneously with shuffling footsteps. 'What do you do here, pray?'

'You would like to know, wouldn't you, Mr.

Calcraft?' said Bywater. 'Studying architecture. There!'

Old Ketch gave a yell of impotent rage, and Bywater decamped, as fast as his legs would carry him, through the west door.

Arrived at his home, or, rather his uncle's, where he lived—for Bywater's paternal home was in a far-off place, over the sea—he went straight up to his own room, where he struck a match, and lighted a candle. Then he unlocked a sort of bureau, and took from it the phial found by old Jenkins, and a smaller piece which exactly fitted into the part broken. He had fitted them in ten times before, but it appeared to afford him satisfaction, and he now sat down and fitted them again.

'Yes,' soliloquised he, as he nursed one of his legs—his favourite attitude—'it's as sure as eggs. And I'd have had it out before, if that old helpless muff of a Jenkins had been forthcoming. I knew it was safe to be somewhere near the college gates; but it was as well to ask.'

He turned the phial over and over between his eye and the candle, and resumed—

'And now I'll give Mr. Ger a last chance. I told him the other day that if he'd only speak up like a man to me, and say it was an accident, I'd drop it for good. But he won't. And find it out, I will. I have said I would from the first, just for

my own satisfaction; and if I break my word, may they tar and feather me! Ger will only have himself to thank; if he won't satisfy me in private, I'll bring it against him in public. I suspected Mr. Ger before; not but what I suspected another; but since Charley Channing—oh! bother, though! I don't want to get thinking of *him!*'

Bywater locked up his treasures, and descended to his tea. That over, he had enough lessons to occupy him for a few hours, and keep him out of mischief.

Meanwhile Mr. Channing's interview with the renowned Mr. Butterby had brought forth nothing, and he was walking back home with Mr. Huntley. Mr. Huntley strove to lead his friend's thoughts into a different channel: it seemed quite a mockery to endeavour to whisper hope for Charley.

'You will resume your own place in Guild-street at once?' he observed.

'To-morrow, please God.'

They walked a few steps further in silence; and then Mr. Channing entered upon the very subject which Mr. Huntley was hoping he would not enter upon. 'I remember, you spoke, at Borcette, of having something in view for Hamish, should I be able to attend to business again. What is it?'

'I did,' said Mr. Huntley; 'and I am sorry that I did. I spoke prematurely.'

'I suppose it is gone?'

'Well—no; it is not gone,' replied Mr. Huntley, who was above equivocation. 'I do not think Hamish would suit for the place.'

Mr. Channing felt a little surprised. There were few places that Hamish might not suit for, if he chose to put out his talents. 'You thought he would suit then?' he remarked.

'But circumstances have since induced me to alter my opinion,' said Mr. Huntley. 'My friend,' he more warmly added to Mr. Channing, 'you will oblige me by allowing the subject to drop. I candidly confess to you that I am not so pleased with Hamish as I once was, and I would rather not interfere in placing him.'

'How has he offended you? What has he done?'

'Nay, that is all I will say. I could not help giving you a hint, to account for what you might have deemed caprice. Hamish has not pleased me, and I cannot take him by the hand. There let it rest.'

Mr. Channing was content to let it rest. In his inmost heart he entertained no doubt that the cause of offence was in some way connected with Mr. Huntley's daughter. Hamish was poor: Ellen would be rich; therefore it was but natural that Mr. Huntley should consider him an ineligible *parti* for her. Mr. Channing did not quite see

what that had to do with the present question; but he could not, in delicacy, urge it further.

They found quite a levee when they got in: the Reverend Mr. Pye, Mr. Galloway—who had called in, with Arthur, upon leaving the office for the night—and William Yorke. All were anxious to welcome and congratulate Mr. Channing; and all were willing to tender a word of sympathy, touching Charles. Possibly Mr. Yorke had also another motive: if so, we shall come to it in due time.

Mr. Pye stayed but a few minutes. He did not say a word about the seniorship, neither did Mr. Channing to him. What, indeed, could either of them say? The subject was unpleasant to both sides; therefore it was best avoided. Tom, however, thought differently.

'Papa!' he exclaimed, plunging into it the moment Mr. Pye's back was turned, 'you might have taken the opportunity to tell him that I shall leave the school. It is not often he comes here.'

'But you are not going to leave the school,' said Mr. Channing.

'Yes, I am,' replied Tom, speaking with unmistakable firmness. 'Hamish made me stay on, until you came home: and I don't know how I have done it. It is of no use, papa! I cannot put up with the treatment—the insults. It was bad

enough to lose the seniorship, but that is as nothing to the other. And to what end should I stop in, when my chance of the exhibition is gone?'

'It is not gone, Tom. Mr. Huntley—as word was written to me at Borcette—has declined it for his son.'

'It is not the less gone for me, papa. Let me merit it as I will, I shall not be allowed to receive it, any more than I did the seniorship. I am out of favour, both with master and boys; and you know what that means, relative to a public school. If you witnessed the way I am served by the boys, you would be the first to say I must leave.'

'What do they do?' asked Mr. Channing.

'They do enough to provoke my life out of me,' said Tom, falling into a little of his favourite heat. 'Were it myself only that they attacked, I don't know but I might stop and brave it out; but it is not. They go on against Arthur in a way that would make a saint mad.'

'Pooh, pooh!' interposed Mr. Galloway, who was standing by. 'If I am content to accept the innocence of Arthur, surely the college school may be.'

Mr. Channing turned to the proctor. 'Do you now believe him innocent?'

'I say I am content to accept his innocence,' was the reply of Mr. Galloway; and Arthur, who

was within hearing, could only do as he had had to do so many times before—school his spirit to patience. 'Content to accept,' and open exculpation, were things essentially different.

'Let me speak with you a minute, Galloway,' said Mr. Channing, taking the proctor's arm and leading him across the hall to the drawing-room. 'Tom,' he added, looking back, 'you shall tell me of these grievances another time.'

The drawing-room door closed upon them, and Mr. Channing spoke with eagerness. 'Is it possible that you still suspect Arthur to have been guilty?'

'Channing, I am fairly puzzled,' returned Mr. Galloway. 'His own manner, relating to it, has not changed, and that manner is not compatible with innocence. You made the same remark yourself, at the time.'

'But you have had the money returned to you, I understand.'

'I know I have.'

'Well, that surely is a proof that the thief could not have been Arthur.'

'Pardon me,' replied Mr. Galloway. 'It may be a proof as much against him as for him; it may have come from himself.'

'Nay. Where was Arthur to get twenty pounds to send to you?'

'There are two ways in which he might get it. But'—Mr. Galloway broke off abruptly—'I do not like to urge these things on you; they can only inflict pain.'

'Not greater pain than I have already undergone,' was Mr. Channing's answer. 'Tell me, I pray you, all your thoughts—all you suspect: just as though you were speaking to any indifferent friend. It is right that I should know it. Yes, come in, Huntley,' Mr. Channing added, for Mr. Huntley at that moment opened the door, unconscious that any private conference was going forward. 'I have no secrets from you. Come in. We are talking of Arthur.'

'I was observing that there are two means by which the money could have come from Arthur,' resumed Mr. Galloway, when Mr. Huntley had entered. 'The one, by his never having used the note, originally taken; the other, by getting a friend to return it for him. Now, my opinion is, that he did not pursue the first plan. I believe that, if he took the note, he used it. I questioned him on the evening of its arrival, and at the first moment his manner almost convinced me that he was innocent. He appeared to be genuinely surprised at the return of the money, and ingenuously confessed that he had not possessed any to send. But his manner veered again—suddenly, strangely

—veered round to all its old unsatisfactory suspiciousness; and when I hinted that I should recall Butterby to my counsels, he became agitated, as he had done formerly. My firm belief'—Mr. Galloway added, laying his hand impressively upon Mr. Channing—'my firm belief is, that Arthur did get the money sent back to me through a friend.'

'But what friend would be likely to do such a thing for him?' debated Mr. Channing, not in the least falling in with the argument. 'I know of none.'

'I think'—and Mr. Galloway dropped his voice —'that it came from Hamish.'

'From Hamish!' was Mr. Channing's echo, in a strong accent of dissent. 'That is nonsense. Hamish would not lend himself to screen guilt. Hamish has not twenty pounds to spare.'

'He might spare it in the cause of a brother: and for a brother's sake he might even screen guilt,' pursued Mr. Galloway. 'Honourable and open as Hamish is, I must still express my belief that the twenty pounds came from him.'

'Honourable and open as Hamish is!' the words grated on the ear of Mr. Huntley, and a cynical expression rose to his face, Mr. Channing observed it. 'What do you think of it?' he involuntarily asked.

'I have never had any other opinion but that

the money did come from Hamish,' drily remarked Mr. Huntley. And Mr. Channing, in his utter astonishment, could not answer.

'Hamish happened to call in at my office the afternoon that the money was received,' resumed Mr. Galloway. 'It was after I had spoken to Arthur. I had been thinking it over, and came to the conclusion that if it had come from Arthur, Hamish must have done it for him. In the impulse of the moment, I put the question to him—Had he done it to screen Arthur? And Hamish's answer was a mocking one.

'A mocking one!' repeated Mr. Channing.

'A light, mocking, careless answer; one that vexed me, I know, at the time. The next day I told Arthur, point blank, that I believed the money came from Hamish. I wish you could have seen his flush of confusion! and, deny it, he did not. Altogether, my impression against Arthur was rather confirmed, than the contrary, by the receipt of the money; though I am truly grieved to have to say it.'

'And *you* think the same!' Mr. Channing exclaimed to Mr. Huntley.

'Never mind what I think,' was the answer. 'Beyond the one opinion I expressed, I will not be drawn into the discussion. I did not intend to say so much: it was a slip of the tongue.'

Mr. Huntley was about to leave the room as he spoke, perhaps lest he might make other 'slips;' but Mr. Channing interposed and drew him back. 'Stay, Huntley,' he said, 'we cannot rest in this uncertainty. Oblige me by remaining one instant, while I call Hamish.'

Hamish entered in obedience. He appeared somewhat surprised to see them assembled in conclave, looking so solemn; but he supposed it related to Charles. Mr. Channing undeceived him.

'Hamish, we are speaking of Arthur. Both these gentlemen have expressed a belief——'

'I beg your pardon,' interrupted Mr. Huntley. 'I said that I should be obliged if you would leave me out of the discussion.'

'What does it signify?' returned Mr. Channing, his tone one of haste. 'Hamish, Mr. Galloway has expressed to me a belief that you have so far taken part with Arthur in that unhappy affair, as to send back the money to him.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Hamish; and his manner was precisely what Mr. Galloway had described it to have been at the time; light, mocking, careless. 'Mr. Galloway did me the honour to express something of the same belief, I remember.'

'Did you send it, Hamish?' asked his father, a severe look crossing his face.

'No, sir, I did not,' emphatically replied Hamish.

And Mr. Huntley turned and bent his keen eye upon him. In his heart of hearts he believed it to be a deliberate falsehood.

'I did not send the money, and I do not know who did send it,' went on Hamish. 'But, as we are upon the subject, perhaps I may be allowed to express my opinion that, if there were as much labour taken to establish Arthur's innocence, as it seems to me there is to prove him guilty, he might have been cleared long ago.'

That the remark was aimed at Mr. Galloway, there was no doubt. Mr. Huntley answered it; and, had they been suspicious, they might have detected a covert meaning in his tone.

'You, at any rate, must hold firm faith in his innocence.'

'Firm and entire faith,' distinctly assented Hamish. 'Father,' he added, impulsively turning to Mr. Channing, 'put all notion of Arthur's guilt from you at once and for ever. I would answer for him with my life.'

'Then he must be screening some one,' cried Mr. Galloway. 'It is one thing or the other. Hamish, it strikes me you know. Who is it?'

A red flush mounted to the brow of Hamish, but he lapsed into his former mocking tone. 'Nay,' said he, 'I can tell nothing of that.'

He quitted the room as he spoke, and the con-

ference broke up. It appeared that no satisfactory solution could be come to, did they keep it on till midnight. Mr. Galloway took leave, and hastened home to dinner.

'I must be going also,' remarked Mr. Huntley. But, nevertheless, he returned with Mr. Channing to the other room.

'You told me at Borcette that you were fully persuaded of Arthur's innocence; you were ready to ridicule me for casting a doubt upon it,' Mr. Channing remarked to him in a low tone, as they crossed the hall.

'I have never been otherwise than persuaded of it,' said Mr. Huntley. 'He is innocent as you, or as I.'

'And yet you join Mr. Galloway in assuming that he and Hamish sent back the money! The one assertion is incompatible with the other.'

'Mr. Huntley laid his hand upon Mr. Channing's shoulder. 'My dear friend, all that you and I can do, is to let the matter rest. We should only plunge into shoals and quicksands, and lose our way in them, were we to pursue it.'

They had halted at the parlour door to speak. Judith came bustling up at that moment from the kitchen, a letter in her hand, and looking as if in her hurry she might have knocked them over, had they not made way for her to enter.

'Bad luck to my memory, then! It's getting not worth a button. Here, Master Arthur. The postman gave it me at the door, just as I had caught sight of the fly turning the corner with the master and missis. I slipped it into my pocket, and never thought of it till this minute.'

'So! it has come at last, has it?' cried Arthur, recognising the handwriting of Roland Yorke.

'Is he really off?' inquired Tom.

'Yes, he is really off,' replied Arthur, opening the letter and beginning to glance over the contents. He has sailed in the ship Africa. Don't talk to me, Tom. What a long letter!'

They left him to read it in peace. Talking together—Mr. and Mrs. Channing, Mr. Huntley, William Yorke, Hamish, Constance—all were in a group round the fire, paying no attention to him. No attention, until an exclamation caused them to turn.

An exclamation half of distress, half of fear. Arthur had risen from his chair,' and stood the picture of excitement, his face and lips blanching.

'What is the matter?' they exclaimed.

'Roland—the ship—Roland'—and there Arthur stopped apparently unable to say more.

'Oh, it's drowned! it's drowned!' cried quick Annabel. 'The ship's drowned, and Roland with it!' And Arthur sunk back in his chair again, and covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER XV.

NEWS FROM ROLAND.

You will like to look over Arthur's shoulder, as he reads the letter just received from Roland Yorke.

"Dear old Chum,

"By the time you get this letter, I shall be ploughing the waves of the briny deep, in the ship Africa. You will get this letter on Wednesday night. That is, you ought to get it; for I have desired Carrick to post it accordingly, and I'm sure he'll do it if he does not forget. And old Galloway will get a letter at the same time, and Lady Augusta will get one. *I* shall have been off more than twenty-four hours previously, for we leave Gravesend on Tuesday at noon. Carrick has behaved like a trump. He has bought me all the things I asked him, and paid my passage money, and given me fifty pounds in my pocket to land with; so I am safe to get on. The only thing he stood out about was the frying-pans. He couldn't see of what use they'd be, he said. So

we made a compromise, and I am taking out only four-and-twenty, instead of the forty dozen that I had thought of. I could not find Bagshaw's list, and the frying-pans are about all I am taking, in the shape of utensils, except a large tool chest, which they palmed upon Carrick, for it was as dear as fire's hot.

'I dare say you have been vowing vengeance upon me, for not coming round to see you before I started; but I stopped away on purpose, for I might have let out something that I did not care to let out then; and that's what I am writing for.

'Old fellow, I have been fit to kill myself. All that bother that they laid upon you about the bank-note ought to have fallen upon me, for it was I who took it. There! the confession's made. And now explode at me for ten minutes with all your energy and wrath, before you read on. It will be a relief to your feelings and to mine. Perhaps if you'd go out of the way to swear a bit, it mightn't be amiss.'

It was at this juncture that Arthur had started up so wildly, causing Annabel to premise that the 'ship was drowned.' In his shock of bewilderment, the first shadowy thought that overpowered him was a dreadful feeling of grief, for Roland's sake. He had liked Roland; with all his faults he had liked him much; and it was as if some cherished

statue had fallen, and been dashed to pieces. Wild, joyful beatings of relief, that Hamish was innocent, were mingling with it, thumping against his heart, soon to exclude all else and fill it to bursting. But as yet this was indistinct: and the first clear idea that came to him was—Was Roland telling truth? or was he only playing a joke upon him? Arthur read on.

'I was awfully hard up for money. I was worse than Hamish, and he was pretty hard then; though he seems to have staved off the fellows since—he best knows how. I told him one day I should like to borrow the receipt, and he laughed and said he'd give it me with all the pleasure in life if it were transferable. Ask him if he remembers saying it. When Galloway was sending the money that day to the cousin Galloway, I thought what a shame it was, as I watched him slip the bank-note inside the letter. That cousin Galloway was always having money sent him, and I wished Galloway would give it me instead. Then came that row with Mad Nance; and as you and Galloway turned to see what was up, I just pulled open the envelope, that instant wet and stuck down, twitched out the money, pressed the gum down again, and came and stood at your back, at the window, leaning out. It did not take me half a minute to do; and the money was in my pocket, and the letter

was empty! But now, look here!—I never meant to steal the note. I am not a Newgate thief, yet. I was in an uncommon fix just then, over a certain affair; and if I could not stop the fellow's mouth, there'd have been the dickens to pay. So I took the money for *that* stop-gap, never intending to do otherwise than replace it in Galloway's desk as soon as I could get it. I knew I should be having some from Lord Carrick. It was all Lady Augusta's fault. She had turned crusty, and would not help me. I stopped out all that afternoon with Knivett, if you remember, and that put me out of the suspicion when the stir came, though it was not for that reason I stayed, for I never had a thought that the row would fall upon us in the office; I supposed the loss would be set down to the post-office—as of course it ought to have been. I stayed out: the bank-note burning a hole all the while in my waistcoat pocket, and sundry qualms coming over me whether I should not put it back again. I began to wonder how I could get rid of it safely, not knowing but Galloway might have the number, and I think I should have put it back, what with that doubt and my twitches of conscience, but for a thing that happened. After I parted with Knivett, I ran home to get something I wanted, and Lady Augusta heard me and called me into her bed-room. "Roland," said she, "I

want you to get me a twenty-pound note from the bank; I have occasion to send one to Ireland." Now, Arthur, I ask you, was there ever such an impetus given to a fellow in his wrong-doing? Of course, my note, that is, Galloway's note, went to Ireland, and a good joyful riddance it seemed, as thoroughly *gone* as if I had dispatched it by telegraph to the North Pole. Lady Augusta handed me twenty sovereigns, and I made believe to go to the bank and exchange them for a note. She put it into her letter, and I took it to the post-office at once. No wonder you grumbled at my being away so long!

'Next came the row. And when I found that suspicion fell upon *you*, I was nearly mad. If I had not parted with the money, I should have gone straight to Galloway and said, "Here it is, I took it." Not a soul stood up for you as they ought! Even Mr. Channing fell into the suspicion, and Hamish seemed indifferent and cool as a cucumber. I have never liked Galloway since; and I long, to this day, to give Butterby a ducking. How I kept my tongue from blurting out the truth, I don't know; but a gentleman born does not like to own himself a thief. It was the publicity given to it that kept me silent; and I hope old Galloway and Butterby will have horrid dreams for a week to come, now they know the

truth! I was boiling over always. I don't know how I managed to live through it, and that soft calf of a Jenkins was always defending Galloway when I flew out about him. Nobody could do more, than I did, to throw the blame upon the post-office—and it was the most likely thing in the world for the post-office to do!—but the more I talked, the more old Galloway brought up his rubbish about his "seals!" I hope he'll have horrid dreams for a month to come! I'd have prosecuted the post-office if I had had the cash to do it with, and that might have turned him.

'Well, old chap, it went on and on—you lying under the cloud, and I mad with everybody. I could do nothing to clear you (unless I had confessed), except sending back the money to Galloway's, with a letter to say you did not do it. It was upon my mind night and day. I was always planning how to accomplish it; but for some time I could not get the money. When Carrick came to Helstonleigh he was short himself, and I had to wait. I told him I was in an awful mess for the want of twenty pounds. And that was true in more senses than one, for I did not know where to turn for money for my own uses. At last Carrick gave it me—he had given me a dab or two before, of five pounds or so, of no use—and then I had to wait an opportunity of getting it to Lon-

don to be posted. Carrick's departure afforded that. I wrote the note to Galloway with my *left* hand, in printing letters, put the money inside it, and Carrick promised to post it in London. I told him it was a *Valentine* to old Galloway, flattering him on his youthful curls, and Carrick laughed till he was hoarse, at the notion. Deuce take his memory! he had been pretty near a week in London before he thought of the letter, and then he put his hand into his pocket and found it. I had given it up by that time, and thought nobody in the world ever had such luck as I got. At last it came; and all I can say is, I wish the post-office had taken that, before it ever did come. Of all the crying shames, that was the worst! The old carp got the money, and *yet* would not clear you! I shall never forgive Galloway for that! and when I come back from Port Natal, rolling in wealth, I'll not look at him when I pass him in the street, which will cork him uncommonly, and I don't care if you tell him so. Had I wavered about Port Natal before, that would have decided me. Clear you I would, and I saw there was no way to do it but by telling the truth, which I did not care to do while I was in Helstonleigh. And now I am off, and you know the truth, and Galloway knows it, for he'll have his letter when you have yours (and I hope it will be a pill for him), and all Helstonleigh

will know it, and you are cleared, dear old Arthur!

'The first person that I shall lavish a little of my wealth upon, when I return, will be poor Jenkins, if he should be still in the land of the living. We all know that he has got as much in him as a gander, and lets that adorable Mrs. J. (I wish you could have seen her turban the morning I took leave!) be mistress and master, but he has done me many a good turn; and, what's more, he *stood up for you.* When Galloway, Butterby, and Co. were on at it, discussing proofs against you, Jenkins's humble voice would be heard, "I am sure, gentlemen, Mr. Arthur never did it!" Many a time I could have hugged him! and he shall get some of my good luck when I reach home. You shall get it too, Arthur! I shall never make a friend to care half as much for as I care for you, and I wish you would have been persuaded to come out with me and make your fortune; but as you would not, you shall share mine. Mind! I should have cleared you, just the same, if you had come.

'And that's all I have to tell. And now you see why I did not care to say "Good-bye," for I don't think I should have said it without telling all. Remember me to the folks at your house, and I hope Mr. Channing will come home stunning.

I shall look to you for all the news, mind! If a great wind blows the Cathedral down, or a fire burns the town up, it's you that must write it; nobody else will. Direct to me — Post-office, Port Natal, until I send you an address, which I shall do the first thing. Have you any news of Charley?

'I had almost forgotten that bright kinsman of mine, the chaplain of Hazledon. Pray present my affectionate compliments to him, and say he has not the least idea how very much I revere him. I should like to see his face when he finds it was I who was the delinquent. Constance can turn the tables on him now. But if she ever forgives him, she'll deserve to be as henpecked as Jenkins is; and tell her I say so.

'I meant to have told you about a spree I have had since I came to London, but there's no room, so I'll conclude sentimentally, as a lady does,

'Yours for ever and ever,

'ROLAND YORKE.'

You must not think that Arthur Channing read this letter deliberately, as you have been able to read it. He had but skimmed it—skimmed it with straining eye and burning brow; taking in its general sense, its various points; but of its words, none. In his overpowering emotion—his

perplexed confusion—he started up with wild words: 'Oh, father! he is innocent! Constance, he is innocent! Hamish, Hamish! forgive—forgive me! I have been wicked enough to believe you guilty all this while!'

To say that they stared at him—to say that they did not understand him—would be poor words to express the surprise that fell upon them, and seemed to strike them dumb. Arthur kept on reiterating the words, as if he could not sufficiently relieve his overburthened heart.

'Hamish never did it! Constance, we might have known it! Constance, what could so have blinded our reason? He has been innocent all this while.'

Mr. Huntley was the first to find his tongue. 'Innocent of what?' asked he. 'What news have you received there?' pointing to the letter.

'It is from Roland Yorke. He says'—Arthur hesitated, and lowered his voice—'That bank-note lost by Mr. Galloway——'

'Well?' they uttered, pressing round him.

'It was Roland that took it!'

Then arose a Babel of voices: questions to Arthur, references to the letter, and explanations. Mr. Channing, amidst his deep thankfulness, gathered Arthur to him with a fond gesture. 'My boy, there has been continual conflict waging

in my heart,' he said: 'appearances *versus* my better judgment. But for your own doubtful manner, I should have spurned the thought that you were guilty. Why did you not speak out boldly?'

'Father, how could I? Believing that it was Hamish. Hamish, dear Hamish, say you forgive me!'

Hamish, was the only one who had retained calmness. Remarkably cool he was. He gazed upon them with the most imperturbable self-possession—rather inclined to be amused than otherwise. 'Suspect me!' cried he, raising his eyebrows.

'We did, indeed!'

'*Bien obligé*,' responded Mr. Hamish. 'Perhaps *you* shared the honour of the doubt?' he mockingly added, turning to Mr, Huntley.

'I did,' replied that gentleman. 'Ellen did not,' he added, losing his seriousness in a half laugh. 'Miss Ellen and I have been at daggers drawn upon the point.'

Hamish actually blushed like a school-girl. 'Ellen knows me better,' was all he said, speaking very quietly. 'I should have thought some of the rest of you had known me better, also.'

'Hamish,' said Mr. Huntley, 'I think we were all in for a host of blunders.'

Mr. Channing had listened in surprise, Mrs.

Channing in indignation. Her brave, good Hamish! her best and dearest!

'I cannot see how it was possible to suspect Hamish,' observed Mr. Channing.

But, before any more could be said, they were interrupted by Mr. Galloway, an open letter in his hand. 'Here's a pretty dinner for a man!' he exclaimed. 'I go home, expecting to get a meal in peace, and I find this pill upon my plate!'

They understood it naturally, what the pill was. Especially Arthur, who had been told by Roland himself, that he was writing to Mr. Galloway. 'You see, sir,' said Arthur with a bright smile, 'that I was innocent.'

'I do see it,' replied Mr. Galloway, laying his hand on Arthur's shoulder. 'Why could you not speak openly to my face and tell me so?'

'Because——I am ashamed, sir, now to confess why. We were all at cross purposes together, it seems.'

'He suspected that it was all in the family, Mr. Galloway,' cried Hamish, in his gay good-humour. 'It appears that he laid the charge of that little affair to *me*.'

'Nonsense!' said Mr. Galloway.

'We both did,' exclaimed Constance, coming forward with streaming eyes. 'Do you think that

the mere fact of the suspicion being cast upon him, all public though it was made, could have rendered us so cowardly miserable as it did? Hamish, how shall we atone to you?'

'The question is, how shall I atone to you, my old friend, for the wrong done your son?' exclaimed Mr. Galloway, seizing Mr. Channing's hand. 'Arthur, you and I shall have accounts to make up together.'

'If reparation for unjust suspicion is to be the order of the day, I think I ought to get some of it,' said laughing Hamish, with a glance at Mr. Huntley.

A sudden thought seemed to strike Mr. Channing. 'Huntley,' he impulsively cried, 'was this the cause of displeasure that you hinted had been given you by Hamish?'

'That, and nothing else,' was Mr. Huntley's answer. 'I suppose I must take him into favour again. "Make reparation," as he says.'

A very saucy smile crossed the lips of Hamish. It as good as said, 'I know who will, if you don't, But Mr. Galloway was interrupting.

'The most extraordinary thing of the whole is,' he observed, with unwonted emphasis, 'that we never suspected Roland Yorke; knowing him as we did know him. It will be a caution to me as long as I live, never to go again by appearances. Care-

less, thoughtless, impulsive conscienceless Roland Yorke! Of course! Who else would have been likely to help themselves to it? I wonder what scales were before our eyes!'

Mr. Channing turned to his son, Tom, who had been seated astride on the arm of a sofa, in a glow of astonishment, now succeeded by satisfaction. 'Tom, my boy! There'll be no particular hurry to leave the college school, will there?'

Tom slid off his perch and went straight up to Arthur. 'Arthur, I beg your pardon heartily for the harsh words and thoughts I may have given you. I was just a fool, or I should have known you could not be guilty. Were you screening Roland Yorke?'

'No,' said Arthur, 'I never suspected him for a moment. As to anybody's begging *my* pardon, I have most cause to do that, for suspecting Hamish. You'll be all right, Tom, now.'

But now, in the midst of this demonstration from all sides, I'll leave you to judge what were the feelings of that reverend divine, William Yorke. You may remember that he was present. He had gone to Mr. Channing's house ostensibly to welcome Mr. Channing home and congratulate him on his restoration. Glad, in truth, was he to possess the opportunity to do that; but Mr. Yorke's

visit also included a purpose less disinterested. Repulsed by Constance in the two or three appeals he had made to her, he had impatiently awaited the return of Mr. Channing, to solicit his influence. Remembering the past, listening to this explanation of the present, you may imagine, if you can, what his sensations must have been. He, who had held up his head, in his haughty Yorke spirit, ready to trample on Arthur for the suspicion of guilt cast upon him, ready to believe that he *was* guilty, resenting it upon Constance, had now to stand and learn that the guilt lay in his family, not in theirs. No wonder he stood silent, grave, his lips drawn in to sternness, his tongue still.

Mr. Galloway soon departed again. He had left his dinner getting cold upon his table. Mr. Huntley took the occasion to leave with him; and, in the earnestness of discussion, they all went out with them to the hall, save Constance. This was Mr. Yorke's opportunity. His arms folded, his pale cheek flushed to pain, he moved before her, and stood there, drawn to his full height, speaking hoarsely.

'Constance, will it be possible for you to forgive me?'

What a fine field it presented for her to play the heroine! to go into fierce declamations that

she never could, and never would forgive him, but would hold herself aloof from him for ever and a day, condemning him to bachelorhood! Unfortunately for the embellishment of these pages, Constance Channing had nothing of the heroine in her composition. She was only one of those simple, truthful, natural English girls, whom I hope you often meet in your every-day life. She smiled at William Yorke through her glistening eye-lashes, and drew closer to him, almost touched him. Did he take the hint? He took *her;* took her on to that manly breast that would henceforth be her shelter for ever.

'Heaven knows how I will strive to atone to you, my darling!'

It was a happy evening, chequered, though it necessarily was, with thoughts of Charles. And Mr. Channing, in the midst of his deep grief and perplexity, thanked God for His wonderful mercy in restoring the aspersed to freedom. 'My boy!' he exclaimed to Arthur, 'how bravely you have borne!'

'Not always very bravely,' said Arthur, shaking his head. 'There were times when I was inwardly rebellious.'

'It could not have been done without one thing,' resumed Mr. Channing: 'firm trust in God.'

Arthur's cheek kindled. That had ever been present with him. 'When things would wear their darkest aspect I used to say to myself, "Patience and hope; and trust in God!" But I never anticipated this bright ending,' he added. 'I never thought that I and Hamish should both be cleared.'

'I cannot conceive how you could have suspected Hamish!' Mr. Channing repeated, after a pause. Of all the wonders, that fact seemed to have taken most hold of his mind.

Arthur made a slight answer, but he did not pursue the topic. There were circumstances connected with it, regarding Hamish, not yet explained. He could not speak of them to Mr. Channing.

Neither were they to be explained, as it seemed, to Arthur. At any rate, not yet awhile. When they retired to rest, Hamish came into his room; like he had done that former night, months ago, when the suspicion had just fastened upon Arthur. They went up-stairs together, and Hamish, instead of turning to his own room, followed Arthur to his. He set down the candle on the table, and turned to Arthur with his frank smile.

'How is it that we can have been playing at these cross purposes, Arthur? Why did you not tell me at the time that you were innocent?'

'I think I did tell you so, Hamish: if my memory serves me right.'

'Well, I am not sure; it may have been so; but in a very undemonstrative sort of manner, if you did at all. That sort of manner from you, Arthur, would only create perplexity.'

Arthur smiled. 'Don't you see? believing that you had taken it, I thought you must know whether I was innocent or guilty. And, for your sake, I did not dare strenuously to defend myself to others. Had but a breath of suspicion fallen upon you, Hamish, it might have cost my father his place.'

'What induced you to suspect me? Surely not the simple fact of being alone for a few minutes with the letter in Galloway's office?'

'Not that. That alone would have been nothing; but, coupled with other circumstances, it assumed a weight. Hamish, I will tell you. Do you remember the trouble you were in at the time? owing money in the town?'

A smile parted Hamish's lips; he looked half inclined to make fun of the reminiscence. 'I remember it well enough. What of that?'

'You contrived to pay those debts, or partially to pay them, at the precise time the note was taken; and we knew you had no money of your own to do it. We saw you also with gold in

your purse—through Annabel's tricks, do you remember?—and we knew that it could not be yours—legitimately yours, I mean.'

Hamish's smile turned into a laugh. 'Stop a bit, Arthur. The money with which I paid up, and the gold you saw, *was* mine—legitimately mine. Don't speak so fast, old fellow.'

'But where did it come from, Hamish?'

'It did not come from Galloway's office, and it did not drop from the skies,' laughed Hamish. 'Never mind where else it came from. Arthur boy, I wish you had been candid, and had given me a hint of the suspicion.'

'We were at cross purposes, as you observe,' repeated Arthur. 'Once plunge into such, and there's no knowing when the enlightenment will come; perhaps never. But you were not very open with me.'

'I was puzzled,' replied Hamish. 'You may remember that, seeing a crowd round the Guildhall, was the first intimation I received of the matter. When they told me, in answer to my questions, that my brother, Arthur Channing, was taken up on suspicion of stealing the bank-note, and was then under examination, I should have laughed in their faces, but for my inclination to knock them down. I went into that hall, Arthur,

trusting in your innocence as implicitly as I trusted in my own, boiling over with indignation against all who had dared to accuse you, ready to stand up for you against the world. I turned my eyes upon you as you stood there, and your gaze met mine. Arthur, what made you look so? I never saw guilt—or perhaps I would rather say shame, conscious shame—shine out more palpably from any countenance than it did from yours then. It startled me—it *cowed* me; and, in that moment, I did believe you guilty. Why did you look so?'

'I looked so for your sake, Hamish. Your countenance betrayed your dismay, and I took it for signs of your own guilt and shame. Not until then did I fully believe you guilty. We were at cross purposes, you see, throughout the piece.'

'Cross purposes, indeed!' repeated Hamish.

'Have you believed me guilty up to now?'

'No,' replied Hamish. 'After a few days my infatuation wore off. It was an infatuation, and nothing less, ever to have believed a Channing guilty. I then took up another notion, and that I have continued to entertain.'

'What was it?'

'That you were screening Roland Yorke.'

Arthur lifted up his eyes to Hamish.

'I did. Roland's excessive championship of you, his impetuous agitation when others brought it up against you, first aroused my suspicions that he himself must have been guilty; and I came to the conclusion that you also had penetrated his guilt, and were generously screening him in a tacit manner. I believed that you would not let a stir be made in it to clear you, lest it should bring it home to him. Cross purposes again, you will say.'

'Ah, yes. Not so much as the idea of suspecting Roland Yorke ever came across me. All my fear was, lest he, or any, should suspect you.'

Hamish laughed as he placed his hands upon Arthur's shoulders. 'The best plan for the future will be, to have no secrets one from the other; otherwise, it seems hard to say what labyrinth we may not get into. What do you say, old fellow?'

'You began the secrets first, Hamish.'

'Did I? Well, let us thank Heaven that the worst are over.'

Ay, thank Heaven! Most sincerely was Arthur Channing doing that. The time to give thanks had come.

Meanwhile Mr. Huntley had proceeded home. He found Miss Huntley in the stiffest and most uncompromising of moods; and no wonder, for Mr. Huntley had kept the dinner waiting, I am

afraid to say how long. Harry, who was to have dined with them that day, had eaten his, and flown off to the town again, to keep some appointment with the college boys. Miss Huntley now ate hers in dignified displeasure; but Mr. Huntley, opposite to her, appeared to be in one of his very happiest moods. Ellen attributed it to the fact of Mr. Channing's having returned home well. She asked a hundred questions about them—of their journey, their arrival—and Mr. Huntley never seemed tired of answering.

Barely was the cloth removed, when Miss Huntley rose. Mr. Huntley crossed the room to open the door for her, and bow her out. Although he was her brother, she would never have forgiven him, had he omitted that little mark of ceremony. Ellen was dutifully following. She could not always brave her aunt. Mr. Huntley, however, gave Ellen a twitch as she was passing him, drew her back, and closed the door upon his sister.

'Ellen, I have been obliged to take Mr. Hamish into favour again.'

Ellen's cheeks turned into a glow. She tried to find an answer, but none came, and it ended in a stammer.

'I find Hamish had nothing to do with the loss of the bank-note.'

Then she found her tongue. 'Oh, papa, no! How could you ever have imagined such a thing? You might have known the Channings better. They are above suspicion.'

'I did know them better at one time, or else you may be sure, young lady, Mr. Hamish would not have been allowed to come here as he did. However, it is cleared up; and I suppose you would like to tell me that I was just a donkey for my pains.'

Ellen shook her head and laughed. She would have liked to ask whether Mr. Hamish was to be allowed to come again on the old familiar footing, had she known how to frame the question. But it was quite beyond her courage.

'When I told him this evening that I had suspected him——'

She clasped her hands, she turned to Mr. Huntley, her rich colour going and coming: 'Papa, you *told* him?'

'Ay. And I was not the only one to suspect him, or to tell him. I can assure you that, Miss Ellen.'

'What did he say? How did he receive it?'

'Told us he was much obliged to us all. I don't think Hamish *could* be put out of temper.'

'Then do you not dislike him now, papa?' she said, timidly.

'I never have disliked him. When I believed what I did of him, I could not dislike him, try as I would. There, you may go to your aunt now.'

And Ellen went, feeling that the earth and air around her had suddenly grown into a terrestrial Eden.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BROKEN PHIAL.

THAT broken phial, which you have heard of, was burning a hole in Bywater's pocket, like Roland Yorke said the bank-note did in his. He had been indecisive about complaining to the master; strangely so for Bywater. The fact was, he had had a strong suspicion, from the very first, that the boy who did the damage to the surplice was Pierce senior. At least, his suspicions had been divided between that gentleman and Gerald Yorke. The cause of suspicion against Pierce need not be entered into, since it was misplaced; in point of fact, Mr. Pierce was, so far as that feat went, both innocent and unconscious. But Bywater could not make sure that he was, and he did not care to bring the accusation against Gerald publicly, should he be innocent.

You saw Bywater, a chapter or two back, fitting the broken pieces together in his bedroom. On the following morning—which was likewise the

morning following the arrival of the important letter from Roland Yorke—Bywater detained Gerald Yorke when the boys tore down the school-room steps after early school.

'I say, Yorke, I said I'd give you a last chance, and now I am doing it,' he began. 'If you'll acknowledge the truth to me about that surplice affair, I'll let it drop. I will, upon my honour. I'll never say another word.'

Gerald flew into a rage. 'Now look you here, Mr. Bywater,' was his angry retort. 'You bother me again with that stale fish, and I'll put you up for punishment. It's——'

Gerald stopped. Tom Channing was passing close to them, and Mr. Gerald had never cared to be heard, when talking about the surplice. At that moment a group of boys, who were running out of the cloisters, the opposite road to Tom Channing, turned round and hissed him, Tod Yorke adding some complimentary remark about 'stolen notes.' As usual, it was a shaft launched at Arthur. Not as usual did Tom receive it. There was nothing of defiant fierceness now in his demeanour; nothing of half-subdued rage. Tom halted: took off his trencher with a smile of suavity that might have adorned Hamish, and thanked them with as much courtesy as if it had been real, especially Tod. Gerald Yorke and

Bywater looked on with surprise. They little dreamt of the great and good secret that Tom now carried within him. He could afford to be calm.

'Why, it's four months, good, since that surplice was damaged,' resumed Gerald, in a tone of irritation to Bywater, as soon as they were alone. 'One would think it was of rare value, by your keeping up the ball in this way. Every now and then you break out afresh about that surplice. Was it made of gold?'

'It was made of Irish linen,' returned Bywater, who generally contrived to retain his coolness, whoever might get heated. 'I tell you that I have got a fresh clue, Yorke; one I have been waiting for. I thought it would turn up some time. If you say you did it, by accident or how you like, I'll let it drop. If you don't, I'll bring it before Pye after breakfast.'

'Bring it,' retorted Gerald.

'Mind you, I mean what I say. I shall bring the charge against you, and I have got the proofs.

'Bring it, I say,' fiercely repeated Gerald. 'Who cares for your bringings? Mind your bones afterwards, that's all.'

He pushed Bywater from him with a haughty gesture, and raced home to breakfast, hoping there'd be something good to abate his hunger.

But Bywater was not to be pushed from his

determination. Never a boy in the school less likely than he. He went home to *his* breakfast, and returned to school to have his name inscribed on the roll, and then went into college with the other nine choristers, and took his part in the service. And the bottle, I say, was burning a hole in his pocket. The Reverend William Yorke was chanting, and Arthur Channing sat at the organ. Would the Very Reverend the Dean of Helstonleigh, standing in his stall so serenely placid, his cap resting on the cushion beside him, ever again intimate a doubt that Arthur was not worthy to take part in the service? But the dean did not know the news yet.

Back in the school-room, Bywater lost no time. He presented himself before the master, and entered upon his complaint, schoolboy fashion.

'Please, sir, I think I have found out who inked my surplice.'

The master had allowed the occurrence to slip partially from his memory. At any rate, it was some time since he had called it up. 'Oh, indeed!' said he somewhat cynically, to Bywater, after a pause given to revolving the circumstances. 'Think you have found out the boy, do you?'

'Yes, sir; I am pretty sure of it. I think it was Gerald Yorke.'

'Gerald Yorke! One of the seniors!' repeated the master, casting a penetrating gaze upon Bywater.

The fact was, Mr. Pye, at the time of the occurrence, had been somewhat inclined to a secret belief that the real culprit was Bywater himself. Knowing that gentleman's propensity to mischief, knowing that the destruction of a few surplices, more or less, would be only fun to him, he had felt an unpleasant doubt upon the point. 'Did you do it yourself?' he now plainly asked of Bywater.

Bywater for once was genuinely surprised. 'I had no more to do with it, sir, than this desk had,' touching the master's. 'I should not have spent many an hour since, trying to ferret it out, if I had done it.'

'Well, what have you found out?'

'On the day it happened, sir, when we were discussing it in the cloisters, little Channing suddenly started up with a word that caused me to think he had seen something connected with it, in which Gerald Yorke was mixed up. But the boy recollected himself before he had said much, and I could get no more from him. Once afterwards I heard him tell Yorke that he had kept counsel about the inked surplice.'

'Is that all?' asked the master, while the whole

school sat with tingling ears, for Bywater was not making his complaint in private.

'Not quite, sir. Please to look at this.'

Bywater had whipped the broken phial out of his pocket, and was handing the smaller piece towards the master. Mr. Pye looked at it curiously.

'As I was turning over my surplice, sir, in the vestry, when I found it that day, I saw this bit of glass lying in the wet ink. I thought it belonged to a small ornamental phial, which Gerald Yorke used to keep, about that time, in his pocket, full of ink. But I couldn't be sure. So I put the bit of glass in my pocket, thinking the phial would turn up some day, if it did belong to it. And so it has. You can put the piece into it, sir, and see whether it fits.'

Gerald Yorke left his place, and joined Bywater before the head master. He looked white and haughty. 'Is it to be borne, sir, that he should tell these lies of me?'

'Are they lies?' returned Mr. Pye, who was fitting the piece into the bottle.

'I have told no lies yet,' said Bywater. 'And I have not said for certain you did it. I say I think so.'

'You never found that bottle upon the surplice! I don't believe it,' foamed Gerald.

'I found the little piece of glass. I put it in

my trousers' pocket, wet with ink as it was, and here are the stains of ink still,' added Bywater, turning out that receptacle for the benefit of Mr. Pye. 'It was this same pair of trousers I had on that day.'

'Bywater,' said the master, 'why did you not say, at the time, that you found the piece of glass?'

'Because, sir, the bit, by itself, would have told nothing. I thought I'd wait till the bottle itself turned up. Old Jenkins, the bedesman, found it a few days ago in the college burial-ground, pretty near to the college gates; just in the spot where it most likely would be, sir, if one came out of the college in a fright and dashed it over.'

'Does this belong to you, Yorke?' inquired the master, scrutinising that gentleman's countenance, as he had previously scrutinised Bywater's.

Gerald Yorke took the phial in his hand and examined it. He knew perfectly well that it was his, but he was asking himself whether the school, apart from Bywater, could contradict him, if he said it was not. He feared they might.

'I had a phial very much like this, sir,' turning it over and over in his hand, apparently for the purpose of a critical inspection. 'I am not sure that this is the same; I don't think it is. I lost mine, sir; somebody stole it out of my pocket, I think.'

'When did you lose it?' demanded Mr. Pye.

'About the time that the surplice got inked, sir; a day or two before it.'

'Who is telling lies now?' cried bold Bywater. 'He had the bottle that very day, sir, at his desk, here, in this schoolroom. The upper boys know he had it, and that he was using it. Channing'—turning round and catching Tom's eye, the first he did catch—'you can bear witness that he was using it that morning.'

'Don't call upon me,' replied Tom, stolidly. 'I decline to interfere with Mr. Yorke, for or against.'

'It is his bottle, and he had it that morning, and I say that I think he must have broken it over the surplice,' persisted Bywater, with as much noise as he dared display in the presence of the master. 'Otherwise, how should a piece out of the bottle be lying on the surplice?'

The master came to the conclusion that the facts were tolerably conclusive. He touched Yorke; 'Speak the truth, boy,' he said, with a tone that seemed to imply he rather doubted Gerald's strict adherence to truth at all times and seasons.

Gerald turned crusty. 'I don't know anything about it, sir. Won't I pummel you for this!' he concluded, in an under tone, to Bywater.

'Besides that, sir,' went on Bywater, pushing Gerald aside with his elbow, as if he were nobody,

'Charles Channing, I say, saw something that led him to suspect Gerald Yorke. I am certain he did. I think it likely that he saw him fling the bottle away, after doing the mischief. Yorke knows that I have given him more than one chance to get out of this. If he had only told me in confidence that it was he who did it, whether by accident or mischief, I'd have let it drop.'

'Yorke,' said the master, leaning his face forward and speaking in an under tone, 'do you remember what I promised the boy who did this mischief? Not for the feat itself, but for braving me, when I ordered him to speak out, and he would not.'

Yorke grew angry and desperate. 'Let it be proved against me, sir, if you please, before you punish. I don't think even Bywater, rancorous as he is, can prove me guilty.'

At this moment, who should walk forward but Mr. Bill Simms, much to the astonishment of the head master, and of the school in general. Since Mr. Simms' confession to the master, touching the trick played on Charles Channing, he had not led the most agreeable of lives. Some of the boys treated him with silent contempt, some worried his life out of him, and all hated him. He could now enjoy a little bit of retaliation on one of them, at any rate.

'Please, sir, the day the surplice was inked, I saw Gerald Yorke come out of the college just before afternoon service, and chuck a broken ink-bottle over into the burial-ground.'

'You saw it!' exclaimed the master, while Gerald turned his livid face, his flashing eye on the young tell-tale.

'Yes, sir. I was in the cloisters, inside one of the niches, and saw it. Charley Channing was in the cloisters, too, but he didn't see me, and I don't think Mr. Yorke saw either of us.'

'Why did you not tell this at the time?'

Mr. Bill Simms stood on his heels and stood on his toes, and pulled his lanky straw hair, and rubbed his face, ere he spoke. 'I was afraid, sir. I knew Mr. Yorke would beat me.'

'Cur!' ejaculated Gerald, below his breath. The head master turned his eyes upon him.

'Yorke, I—'

A commotion at the door, and Mr. Pye stopped, There burst in a lady with a wide extent of crinoline, but that was not the worst of the bustle. Her cheeks were flushed, her hands lifted, her eyes wild; altogether she was in a state of the utmost excitement. Gerald stared with all his might, and the head master rose to receive her as she sailed down upon him. It was Lady Augusta Yorke.

CHAPTER XVII.

A GHOST AGAIN.

Minds are constituted differently: as was exemplified in the case under our immediate notice. While one of Mr. Galloway's first thoughts, on the receipt of Roland Yorke's letter, was to rush round to Lady Augusta's with the news, half in an angry, half in a reproachful humour, Arthur Channing was deliberating how they could contrive to keep it from her. The one was actuated by an angry, the other by a generous spirit.

Mr. Galloway at length ate his long-delayed dinner that evening, and then he put on his hat, and, with Roland's letter to him safe in his pocket, went out again to call on Lady Augusta.—It happened, however, that Lady Augusta was not at home.

She had gone to dine at Colonel Joliffe's, a family who lived some distance from Helstonleigh —necessitating an early departure from her home, if she would be in time for their six o'clock dinner.

It had thus occurred that when the afternoon's post arrived, Lady Augusta was in all the bustle and scuffle of dressing: and Lady Augusta was one of those who are, and must be, in a scuffle, if they are going anywhere beyond common.

Martha was busy assisting, and the cook brought up two letters. 'Both for my lady,' she said, giving them into Martha's hand.

'I have no time for letters now,' called out my lady. 'Put them into my drawer, Martha.'

Martha did as she was bid, and Lady Augusta departed. She returned home pretty late, and the letters remained in their receptacle untouched.

Of course, to retire to rest late, necessitated, with Lady Augusta Yorke, the rising late the subsequent morning. About eleven o'clock she descended to breakfast. A letter on the breakfast table brought to her remembrance the letters of the previous night, and she sent Martha for them. Looking at their superscriptions, she perceived one of them to be from Roland; the other from Lord Carrick: and she laid them by her to be opened presently.

'Mr. Galloway called last night, my lady,' observed Martha.

'Oh, did he?' said Lady Augusta.

'He said he wanted to see your ladyship parti-

cularly. But I said you were gone to Colonel Joliffe's.'

Barely had Lady Augusta tasted her coffee, the letters still lying unopened at her side, when William Yorke entered, having just left the cathedral.

'This is a terrible blow, Lady Augusta,' he observed, as he took a seat.

'What's a blow?' returned Lady Augusta. 'Will you take a cup of coffee, William?'

'Have you not heard of it?' he replied, declining the coffee by a gesture. 'I thought it probable that you would have received news from Roland.'

'A letter arrived from Roland last night,' she said, drawing forward the letter in question. 'What is the matter? Will there be bad news in it? What have you heard?'

Mr. Yorke entertained not the slightest doubt that the letter now before him must contain the same confession which had been conveyed to Arthur and to Mr. Galloway. He deemed it better that she should hear it from him, than read it unprepared. He bent towards her, and spoke in a low tone of compassion.

'I fear that the letter does contain bad news; very bad news, indeed. Ro——'

'Good heavens! what has happened to him?'

she interrupted, falling into a fit of excitement just as Roland himself might have done. 'Is he ill? Has he got hurt? Has he got killed?'

'Now, pray calm yourself, Lady Augusta. Roland is well in health, and has sailed for Port Natal, under what he considers favourable auspices. He——'

'Then why in the world do you come terrifying me out of my wits with your tales, William Yorke?' she broke forth. 'I declare you are no better than a child!'

'Nay, Lady Augusta, you terrified yourself, jumping to conclusions. Though Roland is safe and sound, there is still some very disagreeable news to be told concerning him. He has been making a confession of bad behaviour.'

'Oh,' said Lady Augusta, in a tone which seemed to signify, 'Is that all?' as if bad behaviour and Roland might have some affinity for each other. William Yorke bent his head nearer, and dropped his voice lower.

'In that mysterious affair of the bank-note, when Arthur Channing was accused——'

'Well? well?' she hastily repeated—for he had made a slight pause—and a tone of dread, like a shadow of evil, might be detected in her accents.

'It was Roland who took the note.'

Lady Augusta jumped up. She *would* not re-

ceive it. 'It is not true; it cannot be true!' she reiterated. 'How dare you so asperse him, William Yorke? Thoughtless as Roland is, he would not be guilty of dishonour.'

'He has written the full particulars both to Arthur Channing and to Mr. Galloway,' said Mr. Yorke, calmly. 'I have no doubt that letter to you also relates to it. He confesses that the clearing of Arthur was a great motive in taking him from Helstonleigh.'

Lady Augusta seized the letter and tore it open. She was too agitated to read calmly, but she saw enough to convince her that Roland, and no other, had appropriated the money. This must have been the matter he had obscurely hinted at in one of his last conversations with her. The letter was concluded very much after Roland's own fashion.

'Now, mother, if you care that anything in the shape of honour should ever shine round me again, you'll go off straight to the college school, and set Tom Channing right with it and with the masters. And if yon don't, and I get drowned on my voyage, I'll not say but my ghost will come again and haunt everybody who has had to do with the injustice.'

Ghosts were not agreeable topics to Lady Augusta, and she gave a shriek at the suggested thought. But that was as nothing, compared with

her anger. Honourable in the main—hot, hasty, impulsive, losing all judgment, all self-control when these fits of excitement came upon her—it is more than probable that her own course would have been to fly to the college school, unprompted by Roland. A sense of justice was strong within her; and in setting Tom right, she would not spare Roland, her own son though he was.

Before William Yorke knew what she was about, she had flown upstairs, and was down again with her things on. Before he could catch her up, she was across the Boundaries, entering the cloisters, and knocking at the door of the college school.

There she broke in upon that interesting investigation, touching the inked surplice.

Bywater, who seemed to think she had arrived for the sole purpose of setting at rest the question of the phial's ownership, and not being troubled with any superfluous ideas of circumlocution, eagerly held out the pieces to her when she was yards from his desk. 'Do you know this, Lady Augusta? Isn't it Gerald's?'

'Yes, it is Gerald's,' replied she. 'He took it out of my desk one day in the summer, though I told him not, and I never could get it back again. Have you been denying that it was yours?' she sternly added to Gerald. 'Bad luck to ye, then, for a false boy! You are going to take a leaf out

of your brother Roland's pattern, are ye? Haven't I had enough of you bad boys on my hands, but there must something fresh come up about one or the other of ye every day that the sun rises? Mr. Pye, I have come by Roland's wish, and by my own, to set the young Channings right with the school. You took the seniorship from Tom, believing that it was his brother Arthur who robbed Mr. Galloway. Not but what I thought somebody else would have had that seniorship, ye know!'

In the present mood of Lady Augusta, had any one of her sons committed a murder, she must have proclaimed it, though it had been to condemn him to condign punishment. She had not come to shield Roland, and she did not care, in her anger, how bad she made him out to be, or whether she did it in Irish or English. The head master could only look at her with astonishment. He also believed her visit must have reference to the matter in hand.

'It is true, Lady Augusta. But for the suspicion cast upon his brother, Channing would not have lost the seniorship,' said the master, ignoring the hint touching himself.

'And all of ye'—turning round to face the wondering school—'have been ready to fling ye're stones at Tom Channing, like the badly brought

up boys that ye are! *I* have heard of it. And my two, Gerald and Tod, the worst of ye at the game. You may look, Mr. Tod, but I'll be after giving ye a jacketing for ye're pains. Let me tell ye all, that it was not Tom Channing's brother took the bank-note; it was *their* brother—Gerald's and Tod's! It was my ill-doing boy, Roland, who took it.'

Nobody knew where to look. Some looked at her ladyship; some at the head master; some at the Reverend William Yorke, who stood pale and haughty; some at Gerald and Tod; some at Tom Channing. Tom did not appear to regard it as news; he seemed to have known it before: the excessive astonishment painted upon every other face was absent from his. But, half the school did not understand Lady Augusta. None understood her fully.

'I beg your ladyship's pardon,' said the head master. 'I do not comprehend what it is that you are talking about.'

'Not comprehend!' repeated her ladyship. 'Don't I speak plain? My unhappy son Roland has confessed that it was he who stole the bank-note that so much fuss has been made about, and that Arthur Channing was taken up for. You two may look and frown'—nodding to Gerald and Tod—'but it was your own brother who was the thief;

Arthur Channing was innocent. I'm sure I shan't look a Channing in the face for months to come! Tell them about it in a straightforward way, William Yorke.'

Mr. Yorke, thus called upon, stated, in a few concise words, the facts to the master. His tone was low, but the boys caught the sense, that Arthur was really innocent, and that poor Tom had been degraded for nothing. The master beckoned Tom forward.

'Did you know of this, Channing?'

'Yes, sir; since the letter came to my brother Arthur last night.'

Lady Augusta rushed up impulsively to Tom. She seized his hands, she shook them heartily; she clasped his shoulders. Tom never afterwards was sure that she didn't kiss him. 'Ye'll live to be an honour to your parents yet, Tom,' she said, 'when my boys are breaking my heart with wilfulness.'

Tom's face flushed with pleasure; not so much at the words as at the yearning, repentant faces cast at him from all parts of the room. There was no mistaking that they were eager to offer reparation. Tom Channing innocent all this while! How should they make it up to him? He turned to resume his seat, but Huntley slipped out of the place he occupied as the school's head,

and would have pushed Tom into it. There was some slight commotion, and the master lifted his spectacles.

'Silence, there! Huntley, what are you about? Keep your seat.'

'No, sir,' said Huntley, advancing a step forward. 'I beg your pardon, sir, but the place is no longer mine. I never have counted it mine legally, and I will, with your permission, resign it to its rightful owner. The place is Channing's; I have only occupied it for him.'

He quietly pushed Tom into it as he spoke, and the school, finding their tongues, and ignoring the presence of the master and of Lady Augusta, sprung from their desks at one bound and seized upon Tom—any part of him—wishing him luck, asking him to be a good old fellow and forgive them. 'Long live Tom Channing, the senior of Helstonleigh school;' shouted bold Bywater; and the boys, thus encouraged, took up the shout, and the old walls echoed it—'Long live Tom Channing, the senior of Helstonleigh school!'

Before the noise had died away, Lady Augusta was gone, and another had been added to the company, in the person of Mr. Huntley. 'Oh,' he said, taking in a rapid glance of affairs, 'I see it is all right. Knowing how thoughtless Harry is, I feared lest he might not recollect to do an act

of justice. That he would be the first to do it if he remembered, I knew.'

'As if I should forget that, sir!' responded Mr. Harry. 'Why, I could no more live with Channing under me now, than I'd let any of the others be above me. And I am not sorry,' added the young gentleman, *sotto voce*. 'If the seniorship is a great honour, it is also a great bother. Here, Channing, take the keys.'

He flung them across the desk as he spoke; he was proceeding to fling the roll, and two or three other sundries which belong to the charge of the senior boy, but was stopped by the head master.

'Softly, Huntley! I don't know that I can allow this wholesale changing of places and functions.'

'Oh, yes, you can, sir,' said Harry, with a bright look. 'If I committed any unworthy act, I should be degraded from the seniorship, and another appointed. The same thing can be done now, without the degradation.'

'He deserves a recompense,' said Mr. Huntley to the master. 'But this will be no recompense; it is Channing's due. He will make you a better senior than Harry, Mr. Pye. And now,' added Mr. Huntley, improving upon the whole, 'there will be no necessity to divide the seniorship from the Oxford exhibition.'

It was rather a free mode of dealing with the master's proper privileges, and Mr. Pye relaxed into a smile. In good truth, his sense of justice had been inwardly burning and flaring, set alight by the communication of Lady Augusta. Tom, putting aside a little outburst or two of passion, had behaved admirably throughout the whole season of opprobrium; there was no denying it.

'Will you do your duty as senior, Channing?' superfluously asked the master.

'I will try, sir.'

'Take your place, then.'

Mr. Huntley was the first to shake his hand when he was in it. 'I told you to bear up bravely, my boy! I told you better days might be in store. Continue to do your duty in single-hearted honesty, under God, as I truly believe you are ever seeking to do, and you may well leave things in His hands. God bless you, Tom!'

Tom was a little overcome. But Mr. Bywater made a divertisement. He seized the roll, with which it was no business of his to meddle, and carried it to Mr. Pye. 'The names have got to be altered, sir.' In return for which Mr. Pye sternly motioned him to his seat, and Bywater favoured the school with a few winks as he lazily obeyed.

'Who could possibly have suspected Roland

Yorke!' exclaimed the master, talking in an under tone with Mr. Huntley.

'Nay, if you come to compare merits, he was a far more likely subject for suspicion than Arthur,' was Mr. Huntley's reply.

'He was, taking them comparatively. What I meant to imply was, that one could not have suspected that Roland, knowing himself guilty, would suffer another to lie under the stigma. Roland has his honourable points—if that may be said of one who helps himself to bank-notes,' concluded the master.

'Ay, he is not all bad. Witness the sending back the money to Galloway, witness his persistent championship of Arthur; and the now going away partly to clear him, as he no doubt has done! I was as sure from the first that Arthur Channing was not guilty, as that the sun shines in the heavens.'

'Did you suspect Roland?'

'No. I had a peculiar theory of my own upon the matter,' said Mr. Huntley, smiling, and apparently examining closely the grain of the master's desk. 'A theory, however, which has proved to be worthless; as so many theories, which obtain favour in this world, often are. But I will no longer detain you, Mr. Pye. You must have had enough hindrance from your legitimate business for one morning.'

'The hindrance is not at an end yet,' was the master's reply, as he shook hands with Mr. Huntley. 'I cannot think what has possessed the school latterly: we are always having some unpleasant business or other to upset it.'

Mr. Huntley went out, nodding cordially to Tom as he passed his desk; and the master turned his eyes and his attention on Gerald Yorke.

Lady Augusta had hastened from the college school as impetuously as she had hastened into it. Her errand now was to the Channings. She was eager to show them her grieved astonishment, her vexation—to make herself the *amende* for Roland, so far as she could. She found both Mr. and Mrs. Channing at home. The former had purposed being in Guild-street early that morning; but so many visitors had flocked in to offer their congratulations that he had hitherto been unable to get away. Constance also was at home. Lady Augusta had insisted upon it that she should not come to the children on that, the first day after her father and mother's return. They were alone when Lady Augusta entered.

Lady Augusta's first movement was to fling herself into a chair and burst out crying. 'What am I to say to you?' she exclaimed. 'What apology can I urge for my unhappy boy?'

'Nay, dear Lady Augusta, do not let it thus

distress you,' said Mr. Channing. 'You are no more to be held responsible for what Roland has done, than we were for Arthur, when he was deemed guilty.'

'Oh, I don't know,' she sobbed. 'Perhaps, if I had been more strict with him always, he would never have done it. I wish I had made a point of giving them a whipping every night, all round, from the time they were two years old!' she continued, emphatically. 'Would that have made my children turn out better, do you think?'

Mrs. Channing could not forbear a smile. 'It is not exactly *strictness* that answers with children, Lady Augusta.'

'Goodness me! I don't know what does answer with them, then! I have been indulgent enough to mine, as everybody else knows; and look how they are turning out! Roland to go and take a bank-note! And, as if that was not bad enough, to let the odium rest upon Arthur! You will never forgive him! I am certain that you never can or will forgive him! And you and all the town will visit it upon me!'

When Lady Augusta got into this humour of tearful complaint, it was better to let it run its course; as Mr. and Mrs. Channing knew by past experience. They both soothed her; telling her that no irreparable wrong had been done to

Arthur; nothing but what would be now made right.

'It all turns contrary together!' exclaimed my lady, drying up her tears over the first grievance, and beginning upon another. 'I suppose, Constance, you and William Yorke will be making it up now.'

Constance's smile of self-consciousness, and her drooping eyelids might have told, without words, that that was already done.

'And the next thing, of course, will be your getting married!' continued Lady Augusta. 'When is it to be? I suppose you have been settling the time.'

The question was a direct and pointed one, and Lady Augusta waited for an answer. Mrs. Channing came to the relief of Constance.

'It would have been very soon indeed, Lady Augusta, but for this dreadful uncertainty respecting Charles. In any case, it will not be delayed beyond early spring.'

'Oh, to be sure! I knew that! Everything goes contrary and cross for me! What am I to do for a governess? I might pay a thousand a year and not find one like Constance. They are beginning to improve under you; they are growing more dutiful girls to me; and now it will all be undone again, and they'll just be ruined!

Constance looked up with her pretty timid blush. 'William and I have been thinking, Lady Augusta, that, if you approved, they had better come for a few months to Hazledon House. I should then have them constantly under my own eye, and I think I could effect some good. We had used to speak of this in the summer; and last night we spoke of it again.'

Lady Augusta flew into an ecstacy as great as her late grief had been. 'Oh it would be delightful!' she exclaimed. 'Such a relief to me! and I know it would be the making of them. I shall thank you and William for ever, Constance; and I don't care what I pay you. I'd go without shoes to pay you liberally.'

Constance laughed. 'As to pay,' she said, 'I shall have nothing to do with that, on my own score, when once I am at Hazledon. Those things will lie in William's department, not in mine. I question if he will allow you to pay him anything, Lady Augusta. We did not think of it for profit, but in the hope that it might benefit Caroline and Fanny.'

Lady Augusta turned impulsively to Mrs. Channing. 'What good children God has given you!'

The tears rushed into Mrs. Channing's eyes; she felt the remark in all its grateful truth. She was spared a reply; she did not like to contrast

them with Lady Augusta's, ever so tacitly, and say they were indeed good; for Sarah entered, and said another visitor was waiting in the drawing-room.

As Mr. Channing withdrew, Lady Augusta rose to depart. She took Mrs. Channing's hand. 'How dreadful for you to come home and find one of your children gone!' she uttered. 'How can you ear it and be calm!'

Emotion rose then, and Mrs. Channing had a battle to keep it down. 'The same God who gave me my children, has taught me how to bear,' she presently said. 'For the moment, yesterday, I really was overwhelmed; but it passed away after a few hours' struggle. When I left home, I humbly committed my child to God's good care, in implicit trust; and I feel that, whether dead or alive, that care is still over him.'

'I wish to goodness one could learn to feel as you do!' uttered Lady Augusta. 'Troubles don't seem to touch you and Mr. Channing; you rise superior to them: but they turn me inside out. And now I must go! And I wish Roland had never been born before he had behaved so! You must try and forgive him, Mrs. Channing: you must promise to try and welcome him, should he ever come back!'

'Oh, yes,' Mrs. Channing answered with a bright

smile. 'The one will be as easy as the other has been. He is already forgiven, Lady Augusta.'

'I have done what I could in it. I have been to the college school and told them all, and Tom is put into his place as senior. It's true, indeed! and I hope every boy will be flogged for putting upon him; and Gerald and Tod amongst the rest. And now, good-bye.'

Sarah was holding open the street door for Lady Augusta. Lady Augusta, who generally gave a free word of gossip to everybody, like Roland, had her head turned to the girl as she passed out of it, and thereby nearly fell over a boy who at the moment was seeking to enter, being led by a woman, as if he had no strength to walk alone. A tall, thin, white-faced boy, with great eyes and no hair, and a red handkerchief tied over his head to hide the deficiency; but a beautiful-featured boy in spite of the defects, for he bore a strange resemblance to Charles Channing.

Was it Charles? Or was it his shadow? My lady turned back to the hall, startling the house with her shrieks and cries, that Charley's ghost had come, and bringing forth its inmates in alarmed consternation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BYWATER'S DANCE.

Not Charley's shadow—not Charley's ghost—but Charley himself, in real flesh and blood. One knew him, if the rest did not; and that was Judith. She seized upon him with sobs and cries, and sat down on the hall bench and hugged him to her. But Charley had seen some one else, and he slipped from Judith to the arms that were held out to shelter him, his warm tears breaking forth. 'Mamma! mamma!'

Mrs. Channing's tears fell fast as she received him. She strained him to her bosom, and held him there; and they had to hold *her*, for her emotion was great. It is of no use trying to depict this sort of meeting; when the loved who have been deemed dead, are restored to life: all description must fall short, if not utterly fail. Charley, whom they had mourned as lost, was with them again: traces of sickness, of suffering were in his face, in his attenuate form; but still he was

in life. You must imagine what it was. Mr. and Mrs. Channing, Lady Augusta, Constance, the servants, and the Bishop of Helstonleigh; for no less a personage than that distinguished prelate had been the visitor to Mr. Channing, come to congratulate him on his cure and his return.

The woman who had accompanied Charley stood apart—a hard-featured woman, in a clean cotton gown, and clean brown apron, whose face proclaimed that she lived much in the open air. Perhaps she lived so much in it as to disdain bonnets, for she wore none—a red cotton handkerchief, the fellow to the one on Charley's head, being pinned over her white calico cap, in lieu of one.

Many unexpected meetings take place in this life. A casual acquaintance whom we have met years ago, but whom we never expected to see again, may come across our path to-morrow. You, my reader, did not, I am sure, think to meet that woman again, whom you saw hanging up linen in a boat, as it glided by under the old cathedral walls, under the noses of Bywater and a few more of his tribe, the morning they were throwing away those unlucky keys, which they fondly deemed were never to be fished up again. But here is that very woman before you now, come to pay these pages as unexpected a visit as the keys paid to

the college boys. Not more unlooked for, and not more strange than some of our meetings in actual life.

'Mamma, I have been ill. I have been nearly dying; and she has nursed me through it, and been kind to me.'

Mrs. Channing leaned forward and grasped the woman's hand, gratitude shining from her wet eyes. Mr. Channing and Judith had a fight which should grasp the other. Lady Augusta laid hold of her behind, Sarah assailed her in front. There appeared to be no room left for Constance and the Bishop, or they might have assisted at the demonstration—as the French say.

It was soon explained. That same barge had been passing down stream again that night, when Charley fell into the water. The man heard the splash, called to his horse to stop, leaped overboard, and saved him. A poor little boy with a wound in his head, totally senseless, it proved to be, when they had got him on board and laid him on the bench for inspection. Meanwhile the docile horse went on of its own accord, and before was decided the knotty question of whether the man should bring-to, get him on shore, and try and discover to whom he belonged, the barge was clear of the town, for the current was strong; it had been nearly clear of it when it passed the cathe-

dral wall, and the splash occurred. The man thought it as well that it was so; his voyage, this journey, was being made against time, and he dared not linger. Had Diggs, the boat-house keeper's mother, not put her head underneath the bed clothes and keep it there, she might have heard the sounds of the rescue.

So they kept Charley on board. He had evidently struck his head against something which had caused the wound, and stunned him. It may have been, it is just possible that it may have been, against the projecting wall of the boat-house, as he turned the corner in his fright and hurry. If so, that, no doubt, caused his fall and his stumble into the water. The woman—she had children of her own; that great girl whom you saw scraping potatoes was one, and she had two others younger—washed the wound, and tried to bring Charley round. But she could not awaken him to full consciousness. His mind appeared to be wandering, and ere another day had passed he was in strong delirium. Whether it was the blow, whether it was the terrible fright which had preceded it, or—and this was most probable—both combined, Charles Channing was attacked with brain fever. The woman nursed him through it; she applied her own simple remedies. She cut off his hair, and kept wet linen constantly on his head; and

hot bricks, wrapped round with wet steaming flannel, to his feet, and gave him certain herb tea to drink, which, in her firm belief, her own experience, had never yet failed to subdue fever. Perhaps Charley did as well without a doctor as he would have done with one. By the time they reached their destination the malady was subsiding; but the young patient was so entirely prostrated and weak that all he could do was to lie quite still, scarcely opening his eyes, scarcely moving his hands.

When he became able to talk, they were beginning to move up stream again, as the woman called it. Charley told her all about himself, about his home, his dear mamma and Judith, his papa's ill-health, and hopes of restoration, his college schoolboy life. It was delicious to lie there in the languor of returning health, and talk of these things. The kind woman won his love and confidence; but when she asked him how he came to fall into the river, he could never remember. In the social atmosphere of companionship, in the cheery sunlight, Charley could look back on the 'ghost' in the cloisters, and draw his own deductions. His good sense told him it was no ghost; that it was all a trick of Bywater's and others of the college boys. The woman's opinion was, that if they did do such a

thing to frighten him, they ought to be whipped; but she was inclined to view it as a delusion of Charley's imagination, a relic left by the fever.

'Your folks 'll be fine and pleased to see you again, dear,' she would say to him. 'My master 'll moor the barge to the side when we gets to the place, and I'll take ye home to 'um.'

How Charley longed for it, he alone could tell; pleasant as it was, now he was better, to lie on deck, on a rude bed made of sacks, and glide peacefully along on the calm river, between the green banks, the blue sky above, the warm sun shining on him. Had Charley been placed on that barge in health, he would have thought it the nastiest place he had ever seen—confined, dirty, monotonous. But waking to it from the fever, when he did not care where he lay, so that he could lie, he grew reconciled to its inconveniences before he knew that they were inconveniences; like a young child grows up amidst many disagreeables and perceives them not. Indeed, Charley began to like the boat, but he was none the less eager for the day that would see him leave it.

That day came at last. The barge was brought to; and here you see Charley and his good protector. Charley's clothes looked a mile too small for him, he had so grown in his illness; and Charley was *minus* a cap, and the handkerchief

did duty for one." But it was Charley, in spite of all; and I say that you must imagine the meeting. You must imagine their heartfelt thanks to the woman, and their more substantial recompense.

'Charley, darling, if you could but have written to us, what dreadful distress you would have saved!' exclaimed Constance.

'He writ, miss!' interposed the woman. 'He couldn't have writ to save his life! And we was a-moving up stream again before he was well enough to tell us anything about himself. My husband might have writ a word else; I ain't no hand at a pen myself. We have got quite used to the little gentleman, and shall miss him now.'

'Constance, tell her. Is it not true about the ghost? I am sure you must have heard of it from the boys. She thinks I dreamt it, she says.'

Judith broke out volubly before Constance could answer, testifying that it was true, and relating the ill doings of the boys that night rather more at length than she need have done. She and the woman appeared to be at perfect accord respecting the meed of punishment merited by those gentlemen.

The bishop leaned over Charley. 'You hear what a foolish trick it was,' he said. 'Were I you, I would be upon good terms with such ghosts in

futnre. There are no other sorts of ghosts, my boy.'

'I know there are not,' answered Charles. 'Indeed, my lord, I do know there are not,' he repeated more earnestly. 'And I knew it then; only, somehow I got frightened. I will try and learn to be as brave in the dark as in the light.'

'That's my sensible boy!' said the bishop. 'For my part, Charley, I rather like being in the dark. God seems all the nearer to me.'

The woman was preparing to go, declining all offers that she should rest and take refreshment. 'Our turn both down and up was hurried this time,' she explained, 'and I mayna keep the barge and my master a-waiting. I'll make bold, when we are past the town again, to step ashore, and see how the young gentleman gets on.'

Charley clung to her. 'You shall not go till you promise to stay a whole day with us!' he cried. 'And you must bring the children for mamma to see. She will be glad.'

The woman laughed. 'A whole day! a whole day's pleasure was na for the likes of them,' she answered; 'but she'd try and spare a bit longer to stop nor she could spare now.'

With many kisses to Charles, with many shakings of hands from all, she took her departure. The Bishop of Helstonleigh, high and dignified

prelate that he was, and she a poor, hard-working barge-woman, took her hand into his, and shook it as heartily as the rest. Mr. Channing went out with her. He was going to say a word of gratitude to the man. The bishop also went out, but he turned the other way.

As he was entering Close Street, the bishop encountered Arthur. The latter raised his hat and was passing onwards, but the bishop arrested him.

'Channing, I have just heard some news from your father. That you are at length cleared from that charge. That you have been innocent all this while.'

Arthur's lips parted with a smile. 'Your lordship may be sure that I am very thankful to be cleared at last. Though I am sorry that it should be at the expense of my friend Yorke.'

'Knowing yourself innocent, you might have proclaimed it more decisively. What could have been your motive for not doing so?'

The ingenuous flush flew into Arthur's cheek. 'The truth is, my lord, I suspected some one else. Not Roland Yorke,' he pointedly added. 'But —it was one against whom I should have been sorry to bring a charge. And so—and so—I went on, bearing the blame.'

'Well, Channing, I must say, and I shall say to others, that you have behaved admirably;

showing a true Christian spirit. Mr. Channing may well be happy in his children. What will you give me,' added the bishop, releasing Arthur's hand, which he had taken, and relapsing into his free, pleasant manner, 'for some news that I can impart to you?'

Arthur wondered much. What news could the bishop have to impart which concerned him?

'The little lost wanderer has come home.'

'Not Charles!' uttered Arthur, startled to emotion. 'Charles! and not dead?'

'Not dead, certainly,' smiled the bishop, 'considering that he can talk and walk. He will want some nursing, though. Good-bye, Channing. This, take it for all in all, must be a day of congratulation for you and yours.'

To leap into Mr. Galloway's with the tidings, to make but a few bounds thence home, did not take many minutes for Arthur. He found Charles in danger of being kissed to death—Mrs. Channing, Lady Augusta, Constance, and Judith, each taking her turn. I fear Arthur only made another.

'Why, Charley, you have grown out of your clothes!' he exclaimed. 'How thin and white you are!'

The remarks did not please Judith. 'Thin and white!' she resentfully repeated. 'Did you expect him to come home as red and fat as a

turkey-cock, and him just brought to the edge of the grave with brain fever? One would think, Master Arthur, that you'd rejoice to see him, if he had come back a skeleton, with his bones rattling, when it had seemed too likely you'd never see him at all. And what if he have outgrowed his clothes? They can be let out, or replaced with new uns. I have got hands, and there's tailors in the place, I hope.'

The more delighted felt Judith, the more ready was she to take up words and convert them into uncalled-for grievances. Arthur knew her, and only laughed. A day of rejoicing, indeed, as the bishop had said. A day of praise to God.

Charley had been whispering to his mamma. He wanted to go to the college school-room and surprise it. He was longing for a sight of his old companions. That happy moment had been pictured in his thoughts fifty times, as he lay in the boat; it was almost as much desired as the going home. Charley bore no malice, and he was prepared to laugh with them at the ghost.

'You do not appear strong enough to walk even so far as that,' said Mrs. Channing.

'Dear mamma, let me go! I could walk it, for that, if it were twice as far.'

'Yes, let him go,' interposed Arthur, who divined the feeling. 'I will help him along.'

Charley's trencher—the very trencher found on the banks—was brought forth, and he started with Arthur.

'Mind you bring him back safe this time!' called out Judy in a tone of command, as she stood at the door to watch them along the Boundaries.

'Arthur,' said the boy, 'were they punished for playing me that ghost trick?'

'They have not been punished yet; they are to be. The master waited to see how things would turn out.'

You may remember that Diggs, the boat-house keeper, when he took news of Charles's supposed fate to the college school, entered it just in time to interrupt an important ceremony, which was about to be performed on the back of Pierce senior. In like manner—and the coincidence was somewhat remarkable — Charles himself now entered it, when that same ceremony was just brought to a conclusion, only that the back, instead of being Pierce senior's, was Gerald Yorke's. Terrible disgrace for a senior! and Gerald wished Bywater's surplice had been at the bottom of the river before he had meddled with it. He had not done it purposely. He had fallen in the vestry, the ink-bottle in his hand, which had broken and spilt its contents over the surplice. In an unlucky moment, Gerald had determined to deny

all knowledge of the accident, never supposing it would be brought home to him.

Sullen, angry, and resentful, he was taking his seat again, and the head-master, rather red and hot with exertion, was locking up the great birch, when the door was opened, and Arthur Channing made his appearance, a boy, carrying the college cap, with him.

The school were struck dumb. The head-master paused, birch in hand. But that he was taller and thinner, and that the bright colour and auburn curls were gone, they would have said at once it was Charley Channing.

The master let fall the birch and the lid of his desk. '*Channing!*' he uttered, as the child walked up to him. 'Is it really you? What has become of you all this time? Where have you been?'

'I have been a long way in a barge, sir. The man saved me. And I have had brain fever.'

He looked round for Tom; and Tom, in the wild exuberance of his delight, took Charley in his arms, and the tears dropped from his eyes on Charley's face as he kissed him as warmly as Judith could have done. And then brave Tom could have eaten himself up alive, in mortification at having been so demonstrative in the sight of the college school.

But the school were not in the humour to be fastidious just then. Some of them felt more inward relief at the sight of Charles than they cared to tell; they had never experienced anything like it in their lives, and probably never would again. In the midst of the murmur of heartfelt delight that was arising, a most startling interruption occurred from Mr. Bywater. That gentleman sprung from his desk to the middle of the room, turned a somerset, and began dancing a hornpipe on his head.

'*Bywater!*' uttered the astounded master, 'what's that for? Are you mad?'

Bywater finished his dance, and then brought himself to his feet. 'I am so glad he has turned up all right, sir. I forgot you were in school.'

'I should think you did,' significantly returned the master. But Charles interrupted him.

'You will not punish them, sir, now I have come back safe?' he pleaded.

'But they deserve punishment,' said the master.

'I know they have been sorry; Arthur says they have,' urged Charley. 'Please do not punish them now, sir; it is so pleasant to be back!'

'Will you promise never to be frightened at their foolish tricks again?' said the master. 'Not that there is much danger of their playing

you any: this has been too severe a lesson. I am surprised that a boy of your age, Charles, could allow himself to be scared by "ghosts." You do not suppose there are such things, surely?'

'No, sir; but somehow, that night I got too frightened to think. You will forgive them, sir, won't you?'

'Yes! There! Go and shake hands with them,' said Mr. Pye, relaxing from his dignity. 'It is worth something, Charley, to see you back.'

The school seemed to think so; and I wish you could have heard the shout that went up from it—the real, true, if somewhat noisy delight, that greeted Charles. 'Charley, we'll never dress up a ghost again! We'll never frighten you in any way!' they cried, pressing affectionately round him. 'Only forgive us!'

'Why are you sitting in the senior's place, Tom?' asked Arthur.

'Because it is his own,' said Harry Huntley, with a broad smile of satisfaction. 'Lady Augusta came in and set things right for you, and Tom is made senior of the school at last. Hurrah! Arthur cleared, Tom senior, Charley back, and Gerald flogged! Hurrah!'

'Hurrah! If Pye were worth a dump, he'd give us a holiday!' echoed bold Bywater.

CHAPTER XIX.

READY.

THE glorious surprise of Charley's safety greeted Hamish on his return home to dinner. In fact, he was just in time, having come somewhat before one o'clock, to witness Charley's arrival from the college school-room, escorted by the whole tribe, from the first to the last. Even Gerald Yorke made one, as did Mr. William Simms. Gerald, the smart over, deemed it best to put a light careless, never-me-care face upon his punishment, disgraceful though it was considered to be for a senior. To give Gerald his due, his own share in the day's exploits faded into insignificance, compared with the shock of mortification which shook him, when he heard the avowal of his mother, regarding Roland. He and Tod had been the most eager of all the school to cast the guilt of Arthur in Tom Channing's cheek; they had proclaimed it as particularly objectionable to their feelings that the robbery should have taken place in an office where their brother was a pupil: and

now they found that Tom's brother had been entirely innocent, and that other brother, theirs, guilty! It was well that Gerald's brow should burn. 'But she'd no cause to come here and blurt it out to the lot, right in one's face!' soliloquized Gerald, alluding to Lady Augusta. 'They'd have heard it soon enough, without that.'

Mr. William Simms also attended Charles. Mr. William was hoping that the return of Charley would put him upon a better footing with the school. He need not have hoped it: his offence had been one that the college boys never forgave. Whether Charley returned dead or alive, or had never returned at all, Simms would always remain a sneak in their estimation. 'Sneak Simms,' he had been called since the occurrence: and he had come to the resolve, in his own mind, of writing word home to his friends that the studies in Helstonleigh college school were too hard for him, and asking to be removed to a private one. I think he would have to do so still.

Hamish lifted Charley to him with an eager, fond movement. The sight of him took a weight from his mind. Although really irresponsible for the disappearance of Charles, he had always felt that his father and mother might inwardly attach some blame to him—might deem him to have been wanting in care. Now, all was sunshine.

Dinner over, Mr. Channing walked with Hamish to the office. They were some time in getting there. Every other person they met, stopped Mr. Channing to congratulate him. It seemed that the congratulations were never to end. It was not only the renewed health of Mr. Channing that people had to speak of. Helstonleigh, from one end to the other, was ringing with the news of Arthur's innocence; and Charley's return was getting wind.

They reached Guild Street at last. Mr. Channing entered and shook hands with his clerks, and then took his own place in his private room. 'Where are we to put you now, Hamish?' he said, looking at his son with a smile. 'There's no room for you. You will not like taking your place with the clerks again.'

'Perhaps I had better follow Roland Yorke's plan, and emigrate,' replied Hamish, demurely.

'I wish Mr. Huntley—— By the way, Hamish, it would only be a mark of courtesy if you stepped as far as Mr. Huntley's and told him of Charles's return,' broke off Mr. Channing; the idea occurring to him with Mr. Huntley's name. 'None have evinced more sympathy than he, and he will be rejoiced to hear that the child is safe.'

'I'll go at once,' said Hamish. Nothing loth was he, on his own part, to pay a visit at Mr. Huntley's.

Hamish overtook Mr. Huntley close at his own home. He was returning from the town. Had he been home earlier, he would have heard the news from Harry. But Harry had now had his dinner and was gone again. He did not dine at the late table.

'I have brought you some news, sir,' said Hamish, as they entered together.

'News again! It cannot be very great, by the side of what we were favoured with last night from Mr. Roland,' was the remark of Mr. Huntley.

'But indeed it is. Greater news than even that. We have found Charley, Mr. Huntley.'

Mr. Huntley sprung from the chair he was taking. 'Found Charley! Have you really? Where has he—— Hamish, I see by your countenance that the tidings are good. He must be alive.'

'He is alive and well. At least, well, comparatively speaking. A barge was passing down the river at the time he fell in, and a man leaped overboard and saved him. Charley has been in the barge ever since, and has had brain fever.'

'And how did he come home?' wondered Mr. Huntley, when he had sufficiently digested the news.

'The barge brought him back. It is on its way up again. Charley arrived under convoy of the

barge-woman, a red handkerchief on his head in lieu of his trencher, which, you know, he lost that night,' added Hamish, laughing. 'Lady Augusta, who was going out of the house as he entered, was frightened into the belief that it was his ghost, and startled them all with her cries to that effect, including the bishop, who was with my father in the drawing-room.'

'Hamish, it is like a romance!' said Mr. Huntley.

'Very nearly, taking one circumstance with another. My father's return, cured; Roland's letter; and now, Charley's resuscitation. Their all happening together renders it the more remarkable. Poor Charley does look as much like a ghost as anything, and his curls are gone. They had to cut his hair close in the fever.'

Mr. Huntley paused. 'Do you know, Hamish,' he presently said, 'I begin to think we were all a set of muffs. We might have thought of a barge.'

'If we had thought of a barge, we should never have thought the barge would carry him off,' dissented Hamish. 'However, we have got him back, and I thank God. I always said he would turn up, you know.'

'I must come and see him,' said Mr. Huntley. 'I was at the college school this morning, therefore close to your house, but I did not call. I

thought your father would have enough callers, without me.'

Hamish laughed. 'He has had a great many. The house, I understand, has been like a fair. He is in Guild Street this afternoon. It looks like the happy old times to see him at his pos again.'

'What are you going to do, now your place is usurped?' asked Mr. Huntley. 'Subside into a clerk again, and discharge the one who was taken on in your stead, when you were promoted?'

'That's the question—what is to be done with me?' returned Hamish, in his joking manner. 'I have been telling my father that I had perhaps better pay Port Natal a visit, and join Roland Yorke.'

'I told your father once, that when this time came, I would help you to a post.'

'I am aware you did, sir. But you told me subsequently you had altered your intention—that I was not eligible for it.'

'Believing you were the culprit at Galloway's.'

Hamish raised his eyebrows. 'The extraordinary part of that, sir, is, how you could have imagined such a thing of me.'

'Hamish, I shall always think so myself in future. But I have this justification—that I was not alone. Some of your family, who might be

supposed to know you better than I, entertained the same belief.'

'Yes; Constance and Arthur. But are you sure, sir, that it was not their conduct that first induced you to suspect me?'

'Right, lad. Their conduct—I should rather say their manner—was inexplicably mysterious, and it set me on to ferret out the cause. That they were screening some one, was evident, and I could only come to the conclusion that it was you. But, Master Hamish, there were circumstances on your own part which tended to bear out the belief,' added Mr. Huntley, his tone becoming jocular. 'Whence sprung that money wherewith you satisfied some of your troublesome creditors, just at that same time?'

Once more, as when it was spoken of before, a red flush dyed the face of Hamish. Certainly, it could not be a flush of guilt, while that ingenuous smile hovered on his lips. But Hamish seemed attacked with sudden shyness.

'Your refusal to satisfy me on this point, when we previously spoke of it, tended to confirm my suspicions,' continued Mr. Huntley. 'I think you might make a confidant of me, Hamish. The money could not have dropped from the clouds; and I am sure you possessed no funds of your own just then.'

'But neither did I steal it. Mr. Huntley'—raising his eyes to that gentleman's face—'how closely you must have watched me and my affairs!'

Mr. Huntley drew in his lips. 'Perhaps I had my own motives for doing so, young sir.'

'I earned the money,' said Hamish, who probably penetrated into Mr. Huntley's 'motives;' at any rate, he hoped he did. 'I earned it fairly and honourably, by my own private industry.'

Mr. Huntley opened his eyes. 'Private industry! Have you turned shoemaker?'

'Not shoemaker,' laughed Hamish. 'Bookmaker. The truth is, Mr. Huntley—but will you promise to keep my secret?'

'Ay. Honour bright.'

'I don't want it to be known just yet. The truth is, I have been doing some literary work. Martin Pope got me an introduction to one of the London editors, and I furnished some papers. They were approved of and inserted: but for the first I got no pay. I threatened to strike, and then payment was promised. The first instalment, which came, I chiefly used to *stop* my debts; the second and third to liquidate them. That's where the money came from.'

Mr. Huntley stared at Hamish as if he could

scarcely take in the news. It was, however, only the simple truth. When Martin Pope paid a visit to Hamish, one summer night, frightening Hamish, frightening Arthur, who dreaded it might be a less inoffensive visitor; frightening Constance, for the matter of that, for she heard more of their dread than was expedient; his errand was to tell Hamish that he was to be paid for his papers in future: that payment was to commence forthwith. You may remember the evening, though it is long ago. You may also remember Martin Pope's coming hurriedly into the office in Guild Street, telling Hamish somebody was starting by the train; when both hastened to the station, leaving Arthur in wonder. That was the very London editor himself. He had been on a country tour, and was taking Helstonleigh on his way back; had stayed in it a day or two for the purpose of seeing Martin Pope, who was an old friend, and of being introduced to Hamish Channing. That shy feeling of reticence, which is the characteristic of most persons whose genius is worth anything, had induced Hamish to bury all this in silence.

'But when have you found time to write?' exclaimed Mr. Huntley, who could not get over his surprise. 'You could not find it during office hours.'

'Certainly not. I have written in the evening,

and at night. I have been a great rake, stopping up later than I ought, over this writing.'

'Do they know of it at home?'

'Some of them know that I sit up; but they don't know what I sit up for. By way of a blind —I suppose it may be called a justifiable deceit,' said Hamish, gaily—'I have taken care to carry the office books into my room, that their suspicions may be confined to the accounts. Judy's keen eyes detected my candle burning later than she considered it ought to burn, and her rest has been disturbed with visions of my setting the house on fire. I have counselled her to keep the water-butt full, under her window, so that she may be safe.'

'And are you getting money now?'

'In one sense, I am: I am writing for it. My former papers were mostly disjointed ones; essays, and the like; but I am about a longer work now, to be paid for on completion. When it is finished and appears, I shall startle them at home with the news, and treat them to a sight of it. When all other trades fail, sir, I can set up my staff as author.'

Mr. Huntley's feelings glowed within him. None, more than he, knew the value of silent industry—the worth of those who patiently exercise it. His heart went out to Hamish. 'I suppose I must recommend you to Bartlett's post,

after all,' said he, affecting to speak carelessly, his eye betraying something very different.

'Is it not gone ?' asked Hamish.

'No, it is not gone. And the appointment rests with me. How would you like it ?'

'Nay,' said Hamish, half mockingly; 'the question is, Should I be honest enough for it ?'

Mr. Huntley shook his fist at him. 'If you ever bring that reproach up to me again, I'll—I'll —You had better keep friends with me, you know, sir, on other scores.'

Hamish laughed. 'I should like the post very much indeed, sir.'

'And the house also, I suppose, you would make no objection to ?' nodded Mr. Huntley.

'None in the world. I must work away, though, if it is ever to get furnished.'

'How can you tell but some benevolent spirit might furnish it for you ?' cried Mr. Huntley, quaintly.

They were interrupted before anything more was said. Ellen, who had been out with her aunt, came running in, all excitement. 'Oh, papa! such happy news! Charles Channing is found. He——'

She stopped dead when she saw that she had another auditor. Hamish rose to greet her. He took her hand, released it, and then returned to

the fire to Mr. Huntley. Ellen stood by the table; she had grown suddenly timid.

'You will soon be receiving a visit from my mother and Constance,' observed Hamish, looking at her. 'I heard certain arrangements being discussed, in which Miss Ellen Huntley's name bore a part. We are soon to lose Constance.'

Ellen blushed rosy red. Mr. Huntley was the first to speak. 'Yorke has come to his senses, I suppose?'

'Yorke and Constance between them have. In a short time she is to be transplanted to Hazledon.'

'It is more than he deserves,' emphatically cried Mr. Huntley. 'I suppose you will be for thinking of getting married next, Mr. Hamish, when you come into possession of that house we have been speaking of, and are your own master?'

'I always intended to think of it, sir, as soon as I could,' returned saucy Hamish. And Ellen ran out of the room.

That same afternoon Arthur Channing was seated at the organ in pursuance of his duty, when a message came up from the dean. He was desired to change the anthem fixed upon, taken from the thirty-fifth Psalm, for another, 'O taste and see how gracious the Lord is!'

It was not an anthem in the printed collection

of the cathedral, but one which had been recently composed, and presented to it by a private individual. It consisted of a treble solo and chorus. Why had the dean specially commanded it for that afternoon? It was very rare indeed that he changed the services after they were put up. Had he had *Arthur* in his mind when he fixed upon it? It was impossible to say. Be it as it would, the words found a strangely applicable echo in Arthur's heart, as the sweet voice of Bywater rang through the cathedral.

'Oh taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye that are his saints; for they that fear him lack nothing. The lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; and his ears are open unto their prayers. Great are the troubles of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of all. The Lord delivereth the souls of his servants; and all they that put their trust in him shall not be destitute.'

Every word told upon Arthur's heart, sending it up in thankfulness to that great Lord, the Giver of all good.

He found the dean waiting for him in the nave, when he went down at the conclusion of the ser-

vice. Dr. Gardner was with him. The dean held out his hand to Arthur.

'I am very glad you are cleared,' he said. 'You have behaved nobly.'

Arthur winced. He did not like to take the faintest meed of praise that was not his strict due. The dean might have thought he deserved less, did he know that he had been only screening Hamish; but Arthur could not avow that tale in public. He glanced at the dean with a frank smile:—

'You see now, sir, that I only spoke the truth when I assured you of my innocence.'

'I do see it,' said the dean. 'I believed you then.' And once more shaking Arthur's hand, he turned into the cloisters with Dr. Gardner.

'I have already offered my congratulations,' said the canon, good-humouredly, nodding back to Arthur. Which was correct. He had waylaid Arthur as he went into college.

Arthur suffered them to go on a few steps, and then descended to the cloisters. Old Ketch was shuffling along.

'What's this as I've been a hearing, about that there drownded boy having come back?' asked he of Arthur, in his usual ungracious fashion.

'I don't know what you may have heard, Ketch. He is come back.'

'And he ain't dead? nor drownded?'

'Neither one nor the other. He is alive and well.'

Ketch gave a groan of despair. 'And them horrid young wretches 'll escape the hangman! I'd ha' walked ten miles to see 'em——'

'Gracious, Sir John, what's that you are talking about?' interrupted Bywater, as the choristers trooped up. 'Escaped you! so we have for once. What an agony of disappointment it must be for you, Mr. Calcraft! Such practice for your old hands to topple off a dozen or so of us! Besides the pay! How much do you charge a head, Calcraft?'

Ketch answered by a yell.

Now don't excite yourself, I beg,' went on aggravating Bywater. 'We are thinking of getting up a petition to the dean, to console your disappointment, praying that he'll allow you to wear a cap that we have ordered for you! It's made of scarlet cloth, with long ears, and a set of drooping bells! Its device is a cross beam and a cord, and we wish you health to wear it out! I say, let's wish Mr. Calcraft health! What's the tripe a pound to-day, Calcraft?'

The choristers, in various stages of delight, entered on their aggravating shouts, on their mocking dance. When they had driven Mr.

Ketch to the very verge of insanity, they decamped to the school-room.

I need not enlarge on the evening of thankfulness it was at Mr. Channing's. Not one, but had special cause for gratitude—save, perhaps, Annabel. Mr. Channing restored to health and strength; Mrs. Channing's anxiety removed; Hamish secure in his new prospects—for Mr. Huntley had made them certain; heaviness removed from the heart of Constance; the cloud lifted from Arthur; Tom on the pedestal he thought he had lost, sure also of the Oxford exhibition; Charley amidst them again! They could trace the finger of God in all; and were fond of doing it.

Soon after tea, Arthur rose. 'I must drop in and see Jenkins,' he observed. 'He will have heard the items of news from twenty people, there's little doubt; but he will like me to go to him with particulars. No one in Helstonleigh has been more anxious that things should turn out happily, than poor Jenkins.'

'Tell him he has my best wishes for his recovery, Arthur,' said Mr. Channing.

'I will tell him,' replied Arthur. 'But I fear all hope of recovery for Jenkins is past.'

It was more decidedly past than even Arthur suspected when he spoke. A young woman was attending to Mrs. Jenkins's shop when Arthur

passed through it. Her face was strange to him; but from a certain peculiarity in the eyes and mouth, he inferred it to be Mrs. Jenkins's sister. In point of fact, that lady, finding that her care of Jenkins and her care of the shop rather clashed with each other, had sent for her sister from the country to attend temporarily on the latter. Lydia went up to Jenkins's sick-room, and said a gentleman was waiting: and Mrs. Jenkins came down.

'Oh, it's you!' quoth she. 'I hope he'll be at rest now. He has been bothering his mind over you all day. My opinion is, he'd never have come to this state if he had taken things easy, like sensible people.'

'Is he in his room?' inquired Arthur.

'He is in his room, and in his bed. And what's more, young Mr. Channing, he'll never get out of it alive.'

'Then he is worse?'

'He has been worse this four days. And I only get him up now to have his bed made. I said to him yesterday, "Jenkins, you may put on your things, and go down to the office if you like." "My dear," said he, "I couldn't get up, much less get down to the office;" which I knew was the case, before I spoke. I wish I had had my wits about me!' somewhat irascibly went on Mrs. Jenkins; 'I should have had his bed brought

down to the parlour here, before he was so ill. I don't speak for the shop, I have got somebody to attend to that; but it's such a toil and a trapes up them two pair of stairs for every little thing that's wanted.'

'I suppose I can go up, Mrs. Jenkins?'

'You can go up,' returned she; 'but mind you don't get worrying him. I won't have him worried. He worries himself, without anybody else doing it gratis. If it's not about one thing, it's about another. Sometimes it's his master and the office, how they'll get along; sometimes it's me, what I shall do without him; sometimes it's his old father. He don't need any foreign things to put him up.'

'I am sorry he is so much worse,' remarked Arthur.

'So am I,' said Mrs. Jenkins tartly. 'I have been a doing all I could for him from the first, and it has been like working against hope. If care could have cured him, or money could have cured him, he'd be well now. I have got some trifling savings in the bank, young Mr. Channing, and I have not spared them. If they had ordered him medicine at a guinea a bottle, I'd have got it for him; if they had said he must have wine, or delicacies brought from the other end of the earth, they should have been brought. Jenkins

isn't good for much, in point of spirit, as all the world knows; but he's my husband, and I have strove to do my duty by him. Now, if you want to go up, you can go,' added she, after an imperceptible pause. 'There's a light on the stairs, and you know his room. I'll take the opportunity to give an eye to the kitchen; I don't care to leave him by himself now. Finely it's going on, I know!'

Mrs. Jenkins whisked down the kitchen stairs, and Arthur proceeded up. Jenkins was lying in bed, his head raised by pillows. Whatever may have been Mrs. Jenkins's faults of manner, her efficiency as a nurse and manager could not be called in question. A bright fire burnt in the well-ventilated though small room, the bed was snowy white, the apartment altogether thoroughly comfortable. But—Jenkins!

Fully occupied with his work for Mr. Galloway, it was several days since Arthur had called on Jenkins, and the change he now saw in his face struck him sharply. The skin was glazed and drawn, the eyes were unnaturally bright, the cheeks had fallen in; certainly there could not be very many hours of life left to Jenkins. A smile sat on his parched lips, and his eyelashes became moist as he looked up to Arthur, and held out his feeble hand.

'I knew you would be cleared, sir! I knew that God would surely bring the right to light! I have been humbly thanking Him for you, sir, all day.'

Arthur's eyes glistened also as he bent over him. 'You have heard it then, Jenkins? I thought you would.'

'Yes, sir, I heard it this morning, when it was getting towards mid-day. I had a visit, sir, from his lordship the bishop. I had, indeed! He came up like he has done before—as kindly, and with as little ceremony, as if he had been a poor body like myself. It was he who first told me, Mr. Arthur.'

'I am glad he came to see you, Jenkins.'

'He talked so pleasantly, sir. "It is a journey that we must all take, Jenkins," he said; "and, for my part, I think it matters little whether we take it sooner or later, so that God vouchsafes to us the grace to prepare for it." For the affability, sir, it was just as if it had been a brother talking to me; but he said things different from what any poor brother of mine could have said, and they gave me comfort. Then he asked me if I had taken the Sacrament lately? and I thanked him, and said I had taken it on Sunday last; our clergyman came round to me after service. Mr. Arthur,'—and poor Jenkins's eyes wore an eager

look of gratitude—'I feel sure that his lordship would have administered it to me with his own hands. I wonder whether all the bishops are like him!'

Arthur did not answer. Jenkins resumed, quitting the immediate topic for another.

'And I hear, sir, that Mr. Channing has come home restored, and that the little boy is found. His lordship was so good as to tell me both. Oh, Mr. Arthur, how merciful God is!'

'We are finding Him so, just now,' fervently spoke Arthur.

'And it is all right again, sir, with you and Mr. Galloway?'

'Quite right. I am to remain in the office. I am to be in your place, Jenkins.'

'You'll occupy a better position in it, sir, than I ever did. But you will not be all alone, surely?'

'Young Bartlett is coming to be under me. Mr. Galloway has made the final arrangements to-day. We shall go on all right now.'

'Ay,' said Jenkins, folding his thin hands upon the counterpane, and speaking as in self-commune, 'we must live near to God to know His mercy. It does seem almost as if I had asked a favour of any earthly person, so exactly has it been granted me! Mr. Arthur, I prayed that I might live

to see you put right with Mr. Galloway and the town, and I felt as sure as I could feel, by some internal evidence which I cannot describe, but which was plain to me, that God heard me, and would grant me my wish. It seems, sir, as if I had been let live for that. I sha'n't be long now.'

'While there is life there is hope, you know, Jenkins,' replied Arthur, unable to say anything more cheering in the face of circumstances.

'Mr. Arthur, the hope for me now is, to go,' said Jenkins. 'I would not be restored if I could. How can I tell, sir, but I might fall away from God? If the call comes to-night, sir, it will find me ready. Oh, Mr. Arthur, if people did but know the peace of living close to God—of feeling that they are READY! Ready for the summons, let it come in the second or third watch!'

'Jenkins!' exclaimed Arthur, as the thought struck him, 'I have not heard you cough once since I came in! Is your cough better?'

'Oh, sir, there's another blessing! Now that I am grown so weak that the cough would shatter me—tear my frame to pieces almost—it is gone! It is nearly a week, sir, since I coughed at all. My death-bed has been made quite a pleasant place for me. Except for the weakness, I am free from pain, and I have all things comfortable.

I am rich in abundance: my wife waits upon me night and day—she lets me want for nothing; before I can express a wish, it is done. When I think of all the favours showered down upon me, and how little I can do, or have ever done, for God in return, I am overwhelmed with shame.'

'Jenkins, one would almost change places with you, to be in your frame of mind,' cried Arthur; his tone an impassioned one.

'God will send the same frame of mind to all who care to go to Him,' was the reply. 'Sir,' and now Jenkins dropped his voice, 'I was grieved to hear about Mr. Roland. I could not have thought it.'

'Ay; it was unwelcome news, for his own sake.'

'I never supposed but what the post-office must have been to blame. I think, Mr. Arthur, he must have done it in a dream; like one, I mean, who has not his full faculties about him. I hope the Earl of Carrick will take care of him. I hope he will live to come back a good, brave man! If he would only act less on impulse, and more on principle, it would be better for him. Little Master Charles has been ill, I hear, sir? I should like to see him.'

'I will bring him to see you,' replied Arthur.

'Will you, sir?' and Jenkins's face lighted up.

'I should like just to set eyes on him once again. But—it must be very soon, Mr. Arthur.'

'You think so?' murmured Arthur.

'I know it, sir—I feel it. I do not say it before my wife, sir, for I don't think she sees herself that I am so near the end, and it would only grieve her. It *will* grieve her, sir, whenever it comes, though she may not care to show to people that it does. I shall see you again, I hope, Mr. Arthur?'

'That you shall be sure to do. I will not miss a day now, but what I will come in. It will do me good to see you, Jenkins; to hear you tell again your happy state of resignation.'

'It is better than resignation, Mr. Arthur; it is a state of hope. Not but what I shall leave some regrets behind me. My wife will be lone and comfortless, and must trust to her own exertions only. And my poor old father——'

'If I didn't know it! If I didn't know that, on some subject or other, he'd be safe to be worrying himself, or it would not be him! I'd put myself into my grave at once, if I were you, Jenkins. As good do it that way, as by slow degrees.'

Of course you cannot fail to recognize the voice. She came in at that unlucky moment when Jenkins was alluding to his father. He attempted a defence—an explanation.

'My dear, I was not worrying. I was only telling Mr. Arthur Channing that there were some things I should regret to leave. My poor old father for one; he has looked to me, naturally, to help him a little bit in his old age, and I would rather, so far as that goes, have been spared to do it. But, neither that nor anything else can worry me now. I am content to leave all to God.'

'Was ever the like heard?' retorted Mrs. Jenkins. 'Not worrying! *I* know. If you were not worrying, you wouldn't be talking. Isn't old Jenkins your father, and sha'n't I take upon myself to see that he does not want? You know I shall, Jenkins. When do I ever go from my word?'

'My dear, I know you will do what's right,' returned Jenkins, in his patient meekness: 'but the old man will feel it hard, my departing before him. Are you going, sir?'

'I must go,' replied Arthur, taking one of the thin hands. 'I will bring Charley in to-morrow.'

Jenkins pressed Arthur's hand between his. 'God bless you, Mr. Arthur,' he fervently said; 'may He be your friend for ever! May He render your dying bed happy, as He has rendered mine!' And Arthur turned away—never again to see Jenkins in life.

'Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.'

As Jenkins was, that night, when the message came for him.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHAT DOES IT LIE?

HAD the clerk of the weather been favoured with an express letter containing a heavy bribe, a more lovely day could not have been secured, than that one in January, which witnessed the marriage of Constance Channing to the Rev. William Yorke.

The church ceremony was over, and they were home again; seated at breakfast with the invited guests. But few guests were present, and they mostly close friends: the Huntleys; Lady Augusta Yorke, and Gerald; Mr. Galloway; and the Rev. Mr. Pye, who married them. It is the fashion in these days to have a superfluity of bridesmaids; I am not sure that a young lady would consider herself legally married unless she enjoyed the privilege. Constance, though not altogether a slave to fashion, had followed it, not in a very extensive degree. Annabel Channing, and Ellen Huntley, Caroline and Fanny Yorke, had been the *demoiselles d'honneur*. Charley's auburn curls had grown on again, and Charley himself was in

rather better condition than when he arrived from his impromptu excursion. For grandeur, nobody could match with Miss Huntley; her brocade silk stood on end, stiff, and prim, and stately as herself. Judy, in her way, was stately too; a curiously-fine lace cap on her head, which had not been allowed to see the light since Charley's christening, with a big white satin bow in front of it, twice as large as the cap itself. And that was no despicable size.

The only one who did not behave with a due regard to what might be expected of him, was Hamish—grievous as it is to have to record it. It had been duly impressed upon Hamish that he was to conduct Miss Huntley in to breakfast, etiquette and society consigning that lady to his share. Mr. Hamish, however, chose to misconstrue instructions in the most deplorable manner. He left Miss Huntley, a prey to whoever might pick her up, and took in Miss Ellen. It might have passed muster, possibly, but for Annabel's tongue, which appeared to be under no more stringent rule that important morning than it was at other times.

'Hamish, that's wrong! It is Miss Huntley you are to take in: not Ellen.'

Hamish had grown suddenly deaf. He walked on with Ellen, leaving the confusion to right itself.

Arthur stepped up in the dilemma, and the tips of Miss Huntley's white-gloved fingers were laid upon his arm. It would take her some time to forgive Hamish, favourite though he was. Later, Hamish took the opportunity of reading Miss Annabel a private lecture on the expediency of minding her own business.

Hamish was in his new post now, at the bank: thoroughly well-established. He had not yet taken up his abode in the house. It was too large, he laughingly said, for a single man.

The breakfast came to an end, as other breakfasts do; and next, Constance came down in her travelling-dress. Now that the moment of parting was come, Constance in her agitation longed for it to be over. She hurriedly wished them adieu, and lifted her tearful face last to her father.

Mr. Channing laid his hands upon her. 'May God bless my dear child, and be her guide and refuge for ever! William Yorke, it is a treasure of great price that I have given you this day. May she be as good a wife as she has been a daughter!'

Mr. Yorke, murmuring a few heartfelt words, put Constance into the carriage, and they drove away.

'It will be your turn next,' whispered Hamish to Ellen Huntley, who stood watching the departure from one of the windows.

What Ellen would have said—whether she would have given any other answer than that accorded by her blushing cheeks, cannot be told. The whisper had not been quite so low as Hamish deemed it, and it was overheard by Mr. Huntley.

'There may be two words to that bargain, Mr. Hamish.'

'Twenty, if you like, sir,' responded Hamish, promptly, 'so that they be affirmative ones.'

'Ellen,' whispered Mr. Huntley, 'would you have him, with all his gracelessness?'

Ellen looked ready to drop, and her eyes filled. 'Do not joke now, papa,' was all she said.

Hamish caught her hand, and took upon himself the office of soothing her. And Mr. Huntley relapsed into a smile, and did not hinder him.

But somebody else was bursting into tears: as the sounds testified. It proved to be Lady Augusta Yorke. A few tears might well be excused to Mrs. Channing, on the occasion of parting with her ever-loving, ever-dutiful child, but what could Lady Augusta have to cry about?

Lady Augusta was excessively impulsive: as you have long ago learnt. The happiness of the Channing family, in their social relations to each other; the loving gentleness of Mr. and Mrs. Channing with their children; the thorough respect, affection, duty, rendered to them by the

children in return—had struck her more than ever on this morning. She was contrasting the young Channings with her boys and girls, and the contrast made her feel low-spirited. Thus she was just primed to go off, when the parting came with Constance, and the burst took place as she watched the carriage from the door. Had any one asked Lady Augusta why she cried, she would have been puzzled to state.

'Tell me!' she suddenly uttered, turning and seizing Mrs. Channing's hands—'what makes the difference between your children and mine? My children were not born bad, any more than yours were; and yet, look at the trouble they give me! In what does it lie?'

'I think,' said Mrs. Channing, quietly, and with some hesitation—for it was not a pleasant thing to say what might tacitly reflect on the Lady Augusta—'that the difference in most children lies in the bringing up. Children turn out well or ill as they are trained; they will become our blessing or our grief.'

'Ah, yes, that must be it,' acquiesced Lady Augusta. 'And yet—I don't know,' she rejoined, doubtingly. 'Do you believe that so very much lies in the training?'

'It does, indeed, Lady Augusta. God's laws everywhere proclaim it. Look at the productions

of the earth. Dig out a rough diamond from a mine—what is it, unless you polish it, and cut it, and set it? Do you see its value, its beauty, in its native state? Look at the trees of our fields, the flowers of our parterres, the vegetables of our gardens—what are they, unless they are pruned, dug about, cared for? It is by cultivation alone that they can be brought to perfection. Compare those which have grown up in a wild, rude state, with others that have been sedulously reared and tended; you can scarcely believe them to be of the same species. And, if God made the productions of the earth, so that it is only by our constant attention and labour they can be brought to perfection, would He, think you, have us evince less care for that far more important product, our children's minds? *They* may be trained to perfectness, or they may be let run to waste by neglect.'

'Oh dear!' sighed Lady Augusta. 'But it is a dreadful trouble, always to be worrying over children.'

'It is a trouble that, in a very short time after entering upon it, grows into a pleasure,' said Mrs. Channing. 'I am sure that there is not a single mother, really training her children to good, but will bear me out in the assertion. It is a pleasure that they would not be without. Take it from

them, and the most delightful occupation of their lives is gone. And think of the reward! Were there no higher end to be looked for, it would be found in the loving, obedient docility of the children. You talk of the trouble, Lady Augusta: those who would escape trouble with their children should he careful to train them.'

'I think I'll begin at once with mine,' exclaimed Lady Augusta, brightening up.

A smile crossed Mrs. Channing's lips, as she slightly shook her head. None knew better than she, that training, to bear its proper fruit, must be begun with a child's earliest years.

Meanwhile, the proctor was holding a conference with Mr. Channing. 'Presents seem to be the order of the day,' he was remarking, in allusion to sundry pretty offerings which had been made to Constance. 'I think I may as well contribute my mite——'

'Why, you have done it! You gave her a bracelet, you know,' cried Miss Annabel. For which abrupt interruption she was forthwith consigned to a respectful distance; and ran away to be teased by Tom and Gerald.

'I have something in my pocket which I wish to give to Arthur; which I have been intending for some time to give him,' resumed Mr. Galloway, taking from his pocket what seemed to be a roll

of parchment. 'Will you accept them, Arthur?'

'What, sir?'

'Your articles.'

'Oh! Mr. Galloway—'

'No thanks, my boy. I am in your debt far deeper than I liked to be! A trifling thing like this'—touching the parchment—'cannot wipe out the suspicion I cast upon you, the disgrace which followed it. Perhaps at some future time, I may be able to atone for it better. I hope we shall be together many years, Arthur. I have no son to succeed to my business, and it may be——But I will leave that until the future comes.'

It was a valuable present gracefully offered, and Mr. Channing and Arthur acknowledged it as such, passing over the more valuable hint in silence.

'Children,' said Mr. Channing, as the festivities of the day came to an end, and, the guests departed, they gathered together round their fireside, bereft of Constance, 'what a forcible lesson of God's mercy ought these last few months to teach us! Six months ago, there came to us the news that our suit was lost; other troubles followed upon it, and things looked dark. But I, for one, never lost my trust in God; it was not for a moment shaken; and if you are the children I and your mother have striven to bring up, you did

not lose yours. Tom,' turning suddenly upon him, 'I fear you were the most impatient.'

Tom looked contrite. 'I fear I was, papa.'

'What good did the indulgence in your hasty spirit do you?'

'No good, but harm,' frankly confessed Tom. 'I hope it has helped me to some notion of patience, though, for the future, papa.'

'Ay,' said Mr. Channing. 'Hope on, strive on, work on, and trust on! I believe that you made those your watchwords; as did I. And now, in an almost unprecedentedly short time, we are brought through our troubles. While others, equally deserving, have to struggle for years before the cloud is lifted, it has pleased God to bring us out wonderfully quick, to heap mercies and blessings, and a hopeful future upon us. I may truly say, "He has brought us to great honour, and comforted us on every side."'

"I HAVE BEEN YOUNG, AND NOW AM OLD; AND YET SAW I NEVER THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN, NOR HIS SEED BEGGING THEIR BREAD.

THE END.

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